The Extent and Development of Autobiographical Material in the Works of Franz Kafka.

by

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C O N T E N T S.

Introduction.

Franz Kafka is among the most controversial of twentieth-century authors. In the forty years since his death, a number of critical works has appeared that must seem entirely disproportionate either to the amount of his writing or to its literary worth. Critics have tended, on the whole, to express their purposes euphemistically. As if unwilling to admit that they were concerned with interpretation, they approached Kafka's work in an oblique manner which could only prove unsatisfactory. It was rightly assumed that the works of a "successful" author should require little or no exegetical commentary and, with less justification, that interpretation was nothing less than a gratuitous insult to the author's memory. Since Kafka's literary genius was rarely, if ever, called into question, the critics were compelled by their own hypothesis to find "meaning" in his work and to define that meaning for the benefit of the unenlightened.

Each critical work thus represented an attempt to provide the <u>final</u> definition of Kafka's "Weltanschauung", and critics were seldom deterred by the failure of their predecessors to do just that. Since, however, no unambiguous philosophy or "message" has emerged from Kafka's work in almost half a century - from only three novels and a number of short stories - it seems not unreasonable to conclude that Kafka has failed to make his meaning clear and that, if this is the case, his literary genius has been grossly overrated. Thus, in July 1947, Edmund Wilson could write in the "New Yorker": "I do not see how one can possibly take him [Kafka] for either a great artist or a moral guide." While Wilson's attack upon Kafka cannot, perhaps, be accepted unconditionally, his article, "A Dissenting

Opinion on Kafka", did represent a uniquely honest attempt to bring to the "Kafka-Mode" a sense of perspective that had, on the whole, been missing in previous Kafka-criticism. That Kafka cannot be considered to be a "moral guide" is surely beyond doubt, but it must seem a little unwise to deny literary merit to the author of "Die Verwandlung", "Das Schloß" and several very fine short stories.

It is nonetheless true that Edmund Wilson is one of a very few Kafka-critics who have had the courage to view his work without the aid of rose-coloured spectacles and to attack what, for the avant-garde, was virtually sacrosanct. What the Kafka-"disciples" called great novels, Wilson called "rather ragged performances", what they called profound, he would probably have defined as <u>obscure</u>; and it is this last aspect of Kafka's writing - its obscurity - that we are concerned to explain in the pages that follow, for Kafka's works are, almost without exception, totally obscure. We will not, however, suggest that Kafka deserves no place in the history of European literature, nor that his works are totally devoid of literary merit, but that the appeal of much of his writing has, like the Emperor's new clothes, lain in the very invisibility of its meaning, in its obscurity, and that this obscurity is evidence not of literary greatness but of Kafka's failure to transform personal experience into literature, to invest essentially autobiographical material with universal significance. We will thus attempt to show not that Kafka's works are "meaningless", but that, with certain exceptions (most notably the short stories), his meaning is essentially private and therefore not accessible to the reader. It is this "private meaning" which we intend to define in this thesis.

The aim of the thesis is, then, threefold: firstly, to assess, by reference to biographical and autobiographical sources, the extent to which Kafka drew upon his personal experience in writing his novels and short stories. Secondly, to trace the development of this material within Kafka's works and his success in transforming autobiography into literary fiction. Thirdly, to give an interpretation of each work, based, where possible, upon evidence gained from the biographical and autobiographical works, and with extensive reference to the writings of all the major Kafka-critics.

Ultimately, nothing will have been proved or disproved, for each and every interpretation of Kafka's works - and this is perhaps true of all literary criticism - is, and must remain, arbitrary and beyond proof or disproof. We will not have attempted to provide the final answer to the Kafka problem, but to give an interpretation of his work which is compatible with his experience of life and which does not fly in the face of reason.

C H A P T E R I

"Brief an den Vater."

It is in the nature of autobiography that while it may provide the critic with the deepest insight into the author's thought-processes, its information can only be accepted with the greatest care. While Goethe's "Dichtung und Wahrheit" is, for example, a work of great literary and scholarly interest, it is at the same time a poetic and retrospective account and therefore not the basis for sound biographical study. Such is the case with Kafka's "Brief an den Vater"(1) which he wrote in November 1919, less than five years before his death, and which is his only specifically autobiographical work. Taken alone, the Letter provides the critic with a reasonably convincing survey of cause and effect in the author's life and work, but when biography, diaries and letters are taken into account, a mass of self-contradictions and exaggerations appears, which only the lapse of time and a desire for order at any price can explain. It is not, however, the purpose of this chapter to give a detailed account of these contradictions, but to provide an accurate summary of Kafka's own interpretation of the relationship with his father and of its effect upon his life and work. Where contradictions within the Letter or blatant inaccuracies appear, they will, of course, be noted. The importance of the father-son relationship for the genesis and execution of any one of Kafka's works will be discussed in the appropriate chapter.

The more extreme Freudian psychoanalytical interpreters of Kafka's work,(2) who insist on tracing back not only his mental attitudes throughout his life, but also the complete meaning and motivation of his literary production to the unfortunate relationships of his childhood, have tended to obscure it that Kafka was something more than a neurosis-burdened introvert, seeking some therapeutic effect from his writing, that he was, in fact, an

author in his own right, an artist who found joy in writing stories and in playing with the sounds and meanings of words. In his biography of Kafka,[3] Max Brod, his lifelong friend and companion, rejecting the psychoanalytic interpretations of Kafka's work (though not of his life), refers constantly to an entry found in Kafka's notebooks in which he speaks of "Schreiben als Form des Gebetes".[4] While one such statement may well prove too weak a foundation upon which to base a whole critical appraisal, there are many other passages in his diaries and letters in which Kafka refers at great length to the wealth and pressure of ideas which he felt within himself and to the happiness which he experienced in writing them down. In January 1912, he notes the depth of this urge to write, to the exclusion of all other interests:

> In mir kann ganz gut eine Konzentration auf das Schreiben hin erkannt werden. Als es in meinem Organismus klar geworden war, daß das Schreiben die ergiebigste Richtung meines Wesens sei, drängte sich alles hin und ließ alle Fähigkeiten leer stehn, die sich auf die Freuden des Geschlechtes, des Essens, des Trinkens, des philosophischen Nachdenkens, der Musik zuallererst, richteten. (5)

And again, more briefly and with greater enthusiasm, he quotes from Goethe's "Dichtung und Wahrheit":

> Meine Lust am Hervorbringen war grenzenlos. (6)

Yet here contradictions begin to appear between what Kafka writes in the Letter and the outlook on literature put forward in the diaries. Taken at its face value, the Letter provides admirable material for a

psychoanalytical study. In the paragraph dealing with his writing Kafka clearly states:

> Mein Schreiben handelte von Dir. Ich klagte dort ja nur, was ich an Deiner Brust nicht klagen konnte. (7)

It thus appears that Kafka's works are not the product of a positive love of writing, but are little more than psychiatric case-histories. Kafka is either deliberately distorting the truth or oversimplifying it in an attempt to crystallize and formulate his own position in relation to his family, his writing and the world. There is no doubt that while he attached no value to psychiatry once it got past the analytical stage, Kafka saw the worth of coherent expression in helping the individual better to understand his own position. Brod writes:

> So überwog bei Kafka der Wunsch, seine schwer übersichtliche Seele in einige Ordnung zu bringen, weitaus die allgemeine Schriftstellerfreude am Offenbarwerden des Allerintimsten. (8)

Similarly, in a diary entry for December 18, 1911, we find the following:

> Meinem Verlangen, eine Selbstbiographie zu schreiben, würde ich jedenfalls in dem Augenblick, der mich vom Bureau befreite, sofort nachkommen .... Dann aber wäre das Schreiben der Selbst= biographie eine große Freude, da es so leicht vor sich ginge wie die Niederschrift von Träumen und doch ein ganz anderes, großes, mich für immer beeinflussendes Ergebnis hätte, das auch dem Verständnis und Gefühl eines jeden andern zugänglich wäre. (9)

It is in this light that the information of the Letter must be

examined. Kafka used the material of his own life as a foundation for much of his literature, but wrote not only as a form of therapy but because he loved writing. He was strongly aware of a desire to clarify his own position through autobiography. He wrote the Letter many years after the actual events described, at a time when, suffering from tuberculosis, he expected an early death. Heinz Politzer ends his essay "Letter to his Father" with the words:

> By telling his life as a fable and commenting upon it in his peculiar way, Kafka raised his conflict to the level of literature. (10)

In the last few paragraphs of the Letter, Kafka allows his father the following imaginary reply to the flood of lament that has filled the hundred previous pages:

> Jetzt hättest Du also schon durch Deine Unaufrichtigkeit genug erreicht, denn Du hast dreierlei bewiesen, erstens daß Du unschuldig bist, zweitens daß ich schuldig bin und drittens daß Du aus lauter Großartigkeit bereit bist, nicht nur mir zu verzeihn, sondern, was mehr und weniger ist, auch noch zu beweisen und es selbst glauben zu wollen, daß ich, allerdings entgegen der Wahrheit, auch unschuldig bin. Das könnte Dir jetzt schon genügen, aber es genügt Dir noch nicht. Du hast es Dir nämlich in den Kopf gesetzt, ganz und gar von mir leben zu wollen .... Lebensuntüchtig bist Du; um es Dir aber darin bequem, sorgenlos und ohne Selbstvorwürfe einrichten zu können, beweist Du, daß ich alle Deine Lebenstüchtigkeit Dir genommen

> und in meine Taschen gesteckt habe. Was kümmert es Dich jetzt, wenn Du lebensuntüchtig bist, ich habe ja die Verantwortung. (11)

It is, in its very truthfulness, an unfortunate ending to what might otherwise have been an at least semi-convincing exposition, an ending which savours strongly of "Qui s'excuse s'accuse" and leads the reader to wonder if it was not intended as an advance defence against the just reply which Kafka knew would be forthcoming. The whole Letter assumes the ambivalent tone which the father here denounces:

> ... der verhüllte Ausdruck dafür, daß zwischen uns etwas nicht in Ordnung ist, und daß Du es mitverursacht hast, aber ohne Schuld. (12)
>
> Wobei ich Dich aber immerfort bitte, nicht zu vergessen, daß ich niemals im entferntesten an eine Schuld Deinerseits glaube. Du wirktest so auf mich, wie Du wirken mußtest. (13)

Two thirds of the Letter deal, then, with the conflict between father and child, beginning with the father's accusation not of positive wickedness, but of coldness, estrangement and ingratitude on the part of his son. This much Kafka is prepared to admit, but quickly introduces the theme of mutual guiltlessness which is to recur throughout the Letter: neither father nor son has been the cause of their estrangement; rather the fate that threw two such opposite temperaments together. The words, "Ich sage ja natürlich nicht, daß ich das, was ich bin, nur durch Deine Einwirkung geworden bin",(14) are ironic in view of the virtually Freudian exposition that follows.

With fair objectivity, Kafka states the dominant physical and mental

characteristics of the two antagonists. It is, in essence, the traditional struggle of "Geist" and "Leben"; the father: a fund of vitality, self-confidence and power, a self-made business man, determined, scornful and arbitrary in his judgements; the son: a hypersensitive, frail child, longing for affection, introspective and dreaming. It is the conflict of the masculine and feminine will, of the first and last generations of Thomas Mann's "Buddenbrooks". In a typical sentence from the early part of the Letter, in which accusation and justification combine to give an impression of complete disingenuousness, Kafka writes:

> Du kannst ein Kind nur so behandeln, wie Du eben selbst geschaffen bist, mit Kraft, Lärm und Jähzorn, und in diesem Falle schien Dir das auch noch überdies deshalb sehr gut geeignet, weil Du einen kräftigen mutigen Jungen in mir aufziehen wolltest. (15)

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that Kafka deliberately distorts the biographical details in the Letter. In writing to one's father there would simply be no point in such a deception. Further, in his biography of Kafka, Brod gives an almost identical picture of the father's temperament and of Franz's reaction to it. In the early part of the Letter, Kafka gives an example of his father's punitive methods of a nature so humiliating, that any sensitive child must have suffered the "inneren Schaden" which Kafka describes. At such moments the child's plight cannot but evoke your sympathy, but the man's frightened servility forces you to withdraw it again. The inaccuracy of the Letter lies not in the biographical details, but in their interpretation. Kafka gives a reasonably accurate if

somewhat exaggerated picture of the personalities of father and son and of their reaction to one another, but in attributing not only the sufferings and failures of later years but also his sense of literary vocation to the unfortunate relationships of childhood, he grossly oversimplifies the situation and does both his father and himself the gravest injustice.

In the pages that follow Kafka builds up a picture of his father as a physical and mental tyrant. "Selbstbeherrscher, Tyrann, riesig, Überherrschaft, in Deinem Lehnstuhl regiertest Du die Welt" - such epithets are piled higher and higher until the father loses human proportions altogether and is viewed as a god: "Für mich als Kind war alles, was Du mir zuriefst, geradezu Himmelsgebot". All decisions are arbitrary and do not apply to the self. Logic may be ignored. Contradiction is impossible. The child must be deliberately and thoroughly disillusioned in every idea and undertaking, often for no other reason than the father's natural antagonism. Confidence, determination and joy are systematically destroyed by opposition. Friends of the child are automatically and cruelly damned, even when the father has never met them. Such is the picture Kafka paints of his father and no evidence can be found either in autobiographical or biographical writings which might cast doubt upon its basic truth. That Kafka exaggerated the image, as Brod suggests, is most certainly true. Mountains are constantly made out of molehills: more than a page and a half of the Letter is devoted to the father's method of "Erziehung durch Ironie". Here quite normal sarcasm, such as one would expect from any father, is raised to the level of mental cruelty: "Kannst Du das nicht so und so machen? Das ist Dir wohl schon zu viel?" Kafka displays a similar lack of normal perspective, when he describes his father's annoyance at being

laughed at and imitated:

> Es waren Scherze, wie man sie über Götter und Könige verbreitet, Scherze die mit dem tiefsten Respekt nicht nur sich verbinden lassen, sondern sogar zu ihm gehören. (16)

One wonders whether the child really did have this attitude or if it is not a literary conceit of later years? And could a father be expected to read such depths into his son's disrespect?

So it goes on: alongside the bitterness and resentment, a profound, unhealthy deification - the ambivalent attitude to the father described by Freud and undeniably applicable in the case of Kafka. Except for a short break in which he recalls moments when the father was physically weak or emotionally disturbed, moments in which the barrier was temporarily broken down, it is a history of self-humiliation and guilt, of an impossible child who would not be comforted:

> Übrigens haben auch solche freundliche Eindrücke auf die Dauer nichts anders erzielt, als mein Schuldbewußtsein vergrößert und die Welt mir noch unverständlicher gemacht. (17)

The whole is permeated with weak denials of the father's guilt, rendered utterly ineffectual by the conviction of such remarks as:

> So wie ich bin, bin ich das Ergebnis Deiner Erziehung und meiner Folgsamkeit. (18)

In their objectivity, the descriptions of the other members of the family ring truer. The mother is seen as well-intentioned, but too much under the father's will to be of any real support to the son, while the

sisters are judged according to the amount of resistance which they show to the father. In his literary work, Kafka portrays women in the rôle of comforters who ease the pain of the victim, but can do nothing to solve his problem. Such are the rôles of mother and sisters in the Letter.

At this point, the child-father relationship falls into the background, the rest of the Letter concerning itself with matters beyond the direct influence of the father: religion, career, literature and marriage. In spite of exaggeration and certain accusations against the father which cannot be considered reasonable, the description of these first years rings truest of all. One feels that the Letter should have ended here, for Kafka now goes on to try to fit every detail of his maturity into the pattern of childhood and is forced into mental gymnastics and falsification in the attempt:

> Die Beziehungen zu den Menschen außerhalb der Familie litten aber durch Deinen Einfluß womöglich noch mehr. Ich hatte vor Dir das Selbstvertrauen verloren, dafür ein grenzenloses Schuldbewußtsein eingetauscht. Ich konnte mich nicht plötzlich verwandeln, wenn ich mit anderen Menschen zusammenkam. (19)

Such is the beginning of the last section of the Letter and the foundation for what is to come. If any one aspect of Kafka's childhood relationship with his father is to be taken as representative, it must be the sense of guilt to which he refers in the passage quoted above. Whether the father was entirely responsible for Kafka's constantly uneasy conscience or whether it was something so fundamental in his personality as to be termed a "first cause" is a problem which we will examine in Chapter VI.

A more positive and hopeful note is struck by Kafka when he speaks of the possibility of coming together with the father through Judaism. But the note is not sustained. The author divides his outlook upon Judaism into two basic stages: as a child he felt a sense of guilt towards his father because of his own lack of piety. Later, as a young man, he was unable to understand how the father could reproach him with lack of interest, when Judaism was for the father himself nothing more than a formality, a game that developed at home into a ludicrous farce:

> Wie man mit diesem Material etwas Besseres tun könnte, als es möglichst schnell loszuwerden, verstand ich nicht; gerade dieses Loswerden schien mir die pietätsvollste Handlung zu sein. (20)

Kafka goes on to interpret his father's interest in Judaism as a sentimental memory from his ghetto-like village community and not as a deep, sincere belief. This the child found unacceptable and so strife was bound to ensue. Nor is the assertion of innocence forgotten: "Wäre Dein Judentum stärker gewesen, wäre auch Dein Beispiel zwingender gewesen: das ist ja selbstverständlich und wieder gar kein Vorwurf sondern nur eine Abwehr Deiner Vorwürfe". Yet in the following paragraph no doubt is left in the reader's mind that this is a bitter attack, an accusation of deliberate, premeditated antagonism:

> Da Du von vornherein gegen jede meiner Beschäftigungen und besonders gegen die Art meiner Interessennahme eine Abneigung hast, so hattest Du sie auch hier. Durch meine Vermittlung wurde Dir das Judentum abscheulich, jüdische Schriften unlesbar. (21)

There is little external evidence upon which to judge the truth or falsity of this last analysis. Brod thinks it worth while to quote the passages on Judaism in full, but makes no comment upon them other than that Kafka hoped to escape in some way through Judaism from his father's will and domination, as he did in his attempts at marriage and writing. Kafka does indeed use the words "Ebenso wenig Rettung vor Dir fand ich im Judentum", but goes on to lament that religion failed not in separating him from his father but in bringing them together. Kafka's religious development is fully examined in Chapter VI. It is therefore sufficient to state at this point that although his analysis of his father's Judaism is basically correct, the phenomenon he describes was by no means uncommon among the Prague Jews of his father's generation. In later years Kafka developed a deep interest in all things Jewish, or, more accurately, Eastern Jewish: culture, theology, language, sociology and history, an interest which permeates much of his work and has nothing whatsoever to do with his relationship with his father.

While the escape through Judaism is not recognised by Kafka, he does admit to having gained a certain independence through his writing, only to minimise the admission again with the analysis of his literary motivation quoted at the beginning of this chapter: "Mein Schreiben handelt von Dir". Kafka here makes a mistake which has been perpetuated by his critics throughout the forty years since his death: the mistake of trying to make different works fit the same pattern without regard either to their subject-matter or to the author's stage of development at the time. Schools of Kafka criticism have in the past divided themselves arbitrarily into

"Freudian" and "religious", each refusing even to consider the other's point of view. It is none the less worth while to make some general observations on the words "Mein Schreiben handelt von Dir":

It would be foolish to deny that, in his earliest works ("Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung"), Kafka has reproduced in literary terms almost the exact circumstances of his own youth. Interpretation in these and in certain other short stories (for example "Der Riesenmaulwurf") may vary in detail, but that the main characters are Franz and Hermann Kafka is beyond reasonable doubt.

Among the typically Kafka themes of guilt, punishment and alienation, fairly obvious father-surrogates do appear in Kafka's first novel, "Amerika". Yet the book could never be described as "the productive sublimation of an obvious father-complex" (Klaus Mann).(22) There are elements. No more may be said.

The question of the importance of the father for the genesis and execution of "Der Prozeß" is too wide for the purposes of this section and will be discussed in Chapter V.

Greater critical dissension has arisen, however, over Kafka's last novel, "Das Schloß", and over the shorter work "In der Strafkolonie". Here it is a question of whether Kafka's God - we will assume for the moment that, in these two works at least, Kafka <u>is</u> speaking about God - is nothing more than an infinitely increased version of his own father or is an independently constructed figure, based upon Kafka's own religious ideas as he formed them from personal experience. Kafka himself would most certainly have rejected the Freudian view that the concept of the divine is an aberration, a misconstruction or distortion of the process of sublimation. Yet the

subjectivity of his view renders it invalid or at least suspect. Kafka's "God-figures" do bear a striking resemblance, on a grand scale, to his own father. To the empiricist or the atheist, this must make very good sense since he sees the idea of God as deriving ultimately from purely human concepts amplified into an abstraction. In his essay on Kafka, "Escape from Father", Frederick J. Hoffman writes: "Kafka's reaction to Freud's view of religion should be fairly clear. What Freud regarded as an aberration, Kafka insisted on calling a reality."(23) It is around this philosophical point that the whole problem revolves, Kafka and Brod on one side, the Freudians on the other. In the end, the way one interprets the "religious" works must depend upon one's own religious beliefs; and this will always be so, in all cases. In Chapter VI, we will attempt to show that in Kafka's case neither a Freudian nor a Kantian approach to God can prove entirely satisfactory and to provide a new perspective on the whole question of Kafka's religious development. Briefly, however, we may conclude here that while "Mein Schreiben handelt von Dir" is true of Kafka's earliest works, it must appear as a gross oversimplification if applied to any major work written after 1912.

In the next section of the Letter, dealing with his choice of career, Kafka sinks into such depths of self-abnegation and self-pity that it is virtually impossible to find a rational train of thought. Having pushed aside the idea that he was either intelligent or hard-working as a child, he explains his attitude in the most nebulous terminology:

> Ich hatte solche tiefste Sorgen der geistigen Existenzbehauptung, daß mir alles andere gleichgültig war. (24)

From the problems of self-assertion, the road leads to hypochondria, inertia and a complete lack of self-confidence, the relevant elements in his choice of career:

> Es handelt sich also darum, einen Beruf zu finden, der mir, ohne meine Eitelkeit allzusehr zu verletzen, diese Gleichgültigkeit am ehesten erlaubt. (25)

One can make very little of such material, since what is said is neither concrete nor clear. The mind is so utterly obsessed with its own inability that success has no greater value than failure. Indeed, whereas failure brings immediate consequences, success brings the dread of discovery and of disillusion:

> Mich interessierte der Unterricht, etwas so wie einen Bankdefraudanten, der noch in Stellung ist und vor der Entdeckung zittert. (26)

Throughout his diaries and letters, Kafka complains of illness and inability to work, but there both are related not to his father's influence but to the conflicting claims of literature and office work. In a diary entry for February 1911, he describes the conflict as "ein schreckliches Doppelleben, aus dem es wahrscheinlich nur den Irrsinn als Ausweg gibt";(27) and in August 1913: "Alles, was nicht Literatur ist, langweilt mich, und ich hasse es, denn es stört mich oder hält mich auf, wenn auch nur vermeintlich."(28)

Indifference to school work, hypochondria and intense dissatisfaction in a mundane office-job are more readily explained as the results of a frustrated urge to write than of an elaborately constructed neurosis, derived

from fear of the father.

In his essay on the Letter, Heinz Politzer writes:

> At this time, Kafka was engaged to a J.W. Taking into account that the idea of marriage had become for Kafka a touchstone of his whole existence, we may see in the engagement controversy with his father another incentive for the composition of the Letter. (29)

Of all the problems that tormented Kafka, that of getting married and of founding a family was certainly the greatest. In the Letter, he makes it the most important issue of all:

> Ich fürchte, weil mir in dieser Gegend alles mißlingt, daß es mir auch nicht gelingen wird, Dir diese Heiratsversuche verständlich zu machen. Und doch hängt das Gelingen des ganzen Briefes davon ab, denn in diesen Versuchen war einerseits alles versammelt, was ich an positiven Kräften zur Verfügung hatte, andererseits sammelten sich hier auch geradezu mit Wut alle negativen Kräfte. (30)

Briefly, Kafka interprets his marriage plans as the greatest and the most hopeful of all his attempts to gain independence, plans which seemed to the father to represent little more than momentary infatuations, the desire to satisfy a sexual craving. "Von der Ehe", writes Max Brod, "hat Franz Kafka den höchsten Begriff gehabt",(31) and he goes on to quote from the Letter: "Heiraten, eine Familie gründen, alle Kinder, welche kommen, hinnehmen, in dieser unsicheren Welt erhalten und gar noch ein wenig führen, ist, meiner Überzeugung nach, das Äußerste, das einem Menschen überhaupt gelingen kann. Wie war ich nun auf dieses vorbereitet? Möglichst schlecht."(32)

The conception of marriage as the ultimate and most desirable human achievement appears again and again in Kafka's diaries, letters and works; marriage as the symbol of independence, normality, love and security. Yet Kafka never married. In the Letter he puts forward two reasons: firstly, and more important, that he felt that all the qualities needed for such an undertaking, while present in his father, were absent in himself - thence a feeling of inferiority, engendered by the father; secondly, that in marrying he would endanger his literary production, which in itself he regarded as a form of escape. Both reasons appear in letters and diaries, but with the emphasis reversed. In a summary of the pros and cons of marriage, Kafka wrote in his diaries, in July 1913:

1) Unfähigkeit, allein das Leben zu ertragen

2) .... Gestern sagte meine Schwester: "Alle Verheirateten sind glücklich , ich begreife es nicht"

3) Ich muß viel allein sein. Was ich geleistet habe ist nur ein Erfolg des Alleinseins.

4) Alles, was sich nicht auf Literatur bezieht, hasse ich, es langweilt mich ...

6) Ich bin vor meinen Schwestern oft ein ganz anderer Mensch gewesen, als vor anderen Leuten. Furchtlos, bloßgestellt, mächtig, überraschend, ergriffen wie sonst nur beim Schreiben. Wenn ich es durch Vermittlung meiner Frau vor allen sein könnte! Wäre es dann aber nicht dem Schreiben entzogen? Nur das nicht, nur das nicht!

7) Allein könnte ich vielleicht einmal meinen Posten aufgeben. Verheiratet wird es nie möglich sein. (33)

In Chapters V and VI, we will attempt to show that Kafka was, in

fact, psychologically incapable of marrying and that, in interpreting his dilemma as a conflict between marriage and vocation, he was perhaps influenced by an important precedent: Kierkegaard's engagement to Regina Olsen. In the Letter, however, fear appears as the barrier to Kafka's hopes of marriage, fear that he was incapable and fear that the one capability which he did possess would be destroyed. With a masterly handling of imagery, Kafka sums up his outlook not only upon marriage but upon the relationship with his father as a whole as follows:

> Manchmal stelle ich mir die Erdkarte ausgespannt und Dich quer über sie hinausgestreckt vor. Und es ist mir dann, als kämen für mein Leben nur die Gegenden in Betracht, die Du entweder nicht bedeckst, oder die nicht in Deiner Reichweite liegen. Und das sind entsprechend der Vorstellung, die ich von Deiner Größe habe, nicht viele und nicht sehr trostreiche Gegenden, und besonders die Ehe ist nicht darunter. (34)

Thus, with his marriage plans, Kafka had brought the summary of his life up to date, a summary in which it is anything but easy to sort out fact from fiction. This much may be said with assurance: literary expression was for Kafka the most significant and most satisfactory element in his existence and the "Brief an den Vater" must be placed within the scope of that literary expression. It is an attempt to find a single source for the meaning of a whole life and, as such, doomed to failure from the beginning.

Conclusion

The subject-matter of Kafka's "Brief an den Vater" may be regarded as a suitable basis for further research into the extent and development of autobiographical material in his work. His interpretation of the events of his childhood and youth, and his assessment of the father's influence upon his life and work must, however, be regarded as inaccurate and unreliable.

C H A P T E R II

"Das Urteil".

The critic who approaches literature from a biographical standpoint is, by definition, committed to a philosophy of art that is more truly empirical than metaphysical. He is less inclined to believe that ideas float mystically or independently in man's consciousness than that they derive ultimately from the totality of his experience of life. He is thus prepared to "interpret" and is not ashamed to admit that he hopes to find a "key" to the author's meaning. The outcry of many critics against "Kafka-interpretation" is as futile as is the endless discussion upon the meaning of allegory and symbol. Emrich writes:

> Dennoch ist aber jede Aussage und Bildform wörtlich als eine eigentliche, sich selbst bedeutende zu nehmen. Sie kann und darf nicht auf irgendeinen Sinn oder Begriff, der außerhalb des Werkes steht, im Werk selbst nicht formuliert wird, bezogen und gedeutet werden, so wie man etwa "Das Schloß" als Sitz der "Gnade" gedeutet hat. (1)

A similar view is taken by the French critic Claude-Edmonde Magny:

> We ought not to provide dialectical constructions for the unfolding of events, which should be taken as a <u>real</u> account. Otherwise Kafka is quickly converted into a kind of frustrated philosopher, who needs to be explained to himself and to others for lack of sufficient power of analysis and abstraction. (2)

But what does Magny mean by "a <u>real</u> account", or Emrich when he claims that Kafka's symbols do not refer to anything outside the work? "Real" is, of course, a difficult word, but the following three definitions would seem to exhaust its meaning in the present context.

1. The events described are actual happenings from the author's life: thus pure autobiography.
2. The events are to be taken literally and not endowed with any deeper meaning: thus pure fiction.
3. The works are depictions in literary terms of reality as experienced by the author and are therefore symbolic.

One might of course argue that these events, like the events in the fable, do not necessarily refer to anything other than themselves, that they have a purely objective validity; but the essential quality of the fable would seem to be that it is open to an infinite variety of purely subjective interpretations, that it is symbolism in its purest form. While it is true, and this is perhaps what Emrich and Magny mean, that the fox and the grapes, in the fable of that name, do not refer to anything specific, it is also true that they can refer to anything at all and that, without some form of arbitrary "translation", the fable would only have significance in a situation actually involving foxes and grapes. Unless we are to read Kafka's works as pure autobiography or as pure fiction, we must interpret his symbols. Admittedly, the interpretation in biographical terms is as arbitrary as any other, but only in the sense that the author's own interpretation is arbitrary, and that the work may well have implications which even he cannot foresee. Distaste for "dialectical constructions" seems to result in the end from a confusion of the meanings of "real", from a merging of "actual" and "literal" into a self-contradictory concept of "real-unreality", which allows the critic to talk of "actual happenings which never happened". There is no such thing as a symbol which does not refer to anything. That is a contradiction in terms. The references may be found in the author's

experience, in the biographic details of his life. Aesthetic judgements upon style and form, while important, deal only with the superstructure and are therefore incomplete. The tormenting problems that are described in each and every work by Kafka are the objectified crises of his own life. In the early writings they appear virtually undisguised, like diary-jottings, their meaning clear and unproblematical while in the later works the superstructure is more complicated in accordance with the content. The breadth of Kafka's theme develops chronologically and it is a mark of his literary prowess that his symbolism is more than equal to the subject, for while the "sources" of the early works are, on the whole, fairly apparent, the transformation into literary terms is far more satisfactory in the later works. Theme and treatment develop hand in hand. The intensely personal content of "Das Urteil", Kafka's first completed work, scarcely rises above the level of a neurotic confession, the symbolism is contrived and incoherent and the story only saved from total obscurity by its fantastic conclusion. In "Die Verwandlung", written a few months later, an improvement can be seen. The idea is startling and dramatic, the treatment consistant. The characters and events are not moulded and bent to fit the original situation, but develop naturally from it. Yet even here the subjectivity of the material is apparent. The theme is startling but has not the universality of "Der Prozeß" or "Das Schloß". The treatment is convincing, but lacks the epic quality of the struggle for justice or divine recognition. Thus, while the father appears with all his aggressive might in the short stories, in the novels the figures of authority are searched for in vain. The transformation is so complete as to tempt the critic to divorce ideas from experience and to regard them as "floating mystically and independently in the consciousness" -

symbols without reference, effusing the romantic meanings of the "Blaue Blume". There is no better work with which to destroy this illusion than "Das Urteil".

Wilhelm Emrich has interpreted Gregor Samsa's transformation in "Die Verwandlung" as a return to reality, as the breakthrough of the suppressed subconscious self, "die höchste Realität", into the everyday life of a young business man. Emrich ignores "Das Urteil" either because he feels that the story has no literary merit, or that its interpretation would involve nothing more than a weary repetition of that of "Die Verwandlung". Though little attention has been drawn to the fact in Kafka-criticism, the two works have a very similar development. They treat of the same psychological phenomenon; only the emphasis is different. The key to both stories lies in Kafka's own lifelong and insoluble dilemma, in the mental struggle between two opposed and mutually exclusive ways of life - the unproductive normality of marriage, a profession and social integration, and the creative isolation of bachelordom, independence and his writing. Brod gives the following concise summary of the issues involved:

> Zwei entgegenstrebende Tendenzen bekämpfen einander in Kafka: die Einsamkeitssehnsucht und der Wille zur Gemeinschaft. (3)

This "will to be sociable" was, however, inseparable in Kafka's mind from the will to get married. Throughout his diaries and writings, the bachelor is portrayed as an incomplete being, condemned to a life of

lonely unhappiness, while marriage is seen as a lofty ideal, the perfect though unattainable state:

> Es scheint so arg, Junggeselle zu sein, als alter Mann unter schwerer Wahrung der Würde um Aufnahme zu bitten, wenn man einen Abend mit Menschen verbringen will, sein Essen in einer Hand sich nach Hause zu tragen, niemanden mit ruhiger Zuversicht faul erwarten können, nur mit Mühe oder Ärger jemanden beschenken können, vor dem Haustor Abschied nehmen, niemals mit seiner Frau sich die Treppen hinaufdrängen zu können, kranksein und nur den Trost der Aussicht aus seinem Fenster haben, wenn man sich aufsetzen kann, in seinem Zimmer nur Seitentüren haben, die in fremde Wohnungen führen, die Fremdheit seiner Verwandten zu spüren bekommen, mit denen man nur durch das Mittel der Ehe befreundet bleiben kann, fremde Kinder anstaunen müssen und nicht immerfort wiederholen dürfen: ich habe keine. (4)

More than ten years later, the diaries record exactly the same feelings:

> Das unendliche, tiefe, warme, erlösende Glück, neben dem Korb seines Kindes zu sitzen, der Mutter gegenüber. (5)

Kafka suffered throughout his life from being alone; and yet he never married. In the pages of torturing self-analysis that precede each of his attempts to take a wife, two major reasons for his failure become clear. They are, as we saw in Chapter I, the sense of his own complete inability to make a success of marriage - this derived from his neurotic father-fixation - and the fear that in marrying he would be forced to sacrifice the one activity that had meaning for him: his writing. These problems were brought to a head when, in 1912, he met Felice Bauer, the

girl to whom he was to be engaged for more than five years. The following diary-entry is dated July 21, 1913:

> Zusammenstellung alles dessen, was für und gegen meine Heirat spricht:
>
> 1. Unfähigkeit, allein das Leben zu ertragen.
> 3. Ich muß viel allein sein. Was ich geleistet habe, ist nur ein Erfolg des Alleinseins.
> 6. Ich bin vor meinen Schwestern, besonders früher war es so, oft ein ganz anderer Mensch gewesen als vor anderen Leuten. Furchtlos, bloßgestellt, mächtig, überraschend, ergriffen wie sonst nur beim Schreiben. Wenn ich es durch Vermittlung meiner Frau vor allen sein könnte! Wäre es dann aber nicht dem Schreiben entzogen? Nur das nicht, nur das nicht! (6)

It was against this background of doubt and insecurity that Kafka wrote "Das Urteil", six weeks after his meeting with F.B., and it is around his personal dilemma that the story revolves.

Georg Bendemann, whom we meet at the beginning of the story, cannot, in spite of the play on names pointed out by Kafka in the diaries,(7) be identified with the author at any period during his life, but possesses all those characteristics which Kafka admired in others but was incapable of assuming himself. Georg is a young, successful, middle-class business man, well-adjusted, self-confident and just a little smug. His complete social integration is marked by his success in love and by his having just become engaged to a certain F.B., an acceptable young lady "aus wohlhabender Familie". In his thoughts about the long-lost friend in Russia, he betrays the middle-class distaste for irregularity in life and a certain superior sympathy for a man, "der sich offenbar verrannt hatte, den man

bedauern, dem man aber nicht helfen konnte". Georg shows himself to be, in fact, the epitome of social normality and acceptability. He is aesthetically a philistine, materialistic in his outlook and yet not without a certain insight into the feelings of others, expressed in the letter with all the tact and diplomacy of the experienced business man. In Emrich's terminology Georg, as we first see him, represents the "Man", the outer self: Georg Bendemann's outer self, but certainly not Kafka's. The American critic, Kate Flores, in her otherwise excellent essay on "Das Urteil", falls into the trap of trying to find perfect analogies between every character in the story and elements of Kafka's own personality. Thus she writes:

> Now this outer picture of Georg Bendemann corresponds rather closely with the outer Kafka, the Kafka whom his friends and associates knew: a normal enough young man, affable and debonair, suave, self-contained, decisive, the favored son of a well-to-do merchant. Thus Max Brod says: I have experienced over and over again that admirers of Kafka who know him only from his books have a completely false picture of him. They think he must have made a sad, even desparate impression in company too. The opposite is the case. (8)

To say that Kafka was gay and alive in company is, however, a very different matter from classing him as either a successful business man or the "favored[!] son of a well-to-do merchant". Kafka suffered deeply under the burdens of office and factory work and expressed in "Die Verwandlung" the sheer impossibility of leading just the sort of life led by Georg in "Das Urteil". Georg Bendemann is <u>not</u> Franz Kafka; at least not until the

moment when he enters his father's room. The step which Kafka is contemplating in real life is here assumed to have taken place, in order that the result may be examined from every side. "Franz Kafka, once a lonely writer, has now abandoned his writing and his loneliness to become a successful business man, about to be married." Such is the original, though unspoken premiss to "Das Urteil", a momentary suspension of reality for the sake of clarity. Thus, in "Das Urteil", we see the first example of Kafka's experimental or hypothetical technique. He does not merely reproduce situations from his own life, but uses the works to examine the logical outcome of those situations, and thus as an aid to judgement, as a means of deciding which course of action he will in fact take. The point will be developed in subsequent chapters.

Less problematic than Georg himself is the figure of the friend in Russia.(9) In every line can be traced Kafka the writer. The once flourishing but now stagnant business in St. Petersburg is Kafka's literary work which had begun promisingly in 1902, only to fall into obscurity by 1911. The sickness, caused by wearing himself out to no purpose, is Kafka's own despair and hypochondria. The Russian friend's social position - "er hatte keine rechte Verbindung mit der dortigen Kolonie seiner Landsleute, aber auch fast keinen gesellschaftlichen Verkehr mit einheimischen Familien" - is identical with the author's own in Prague: alienated from the Czechs because he was a German, alienated from the Germans because he was a Jew and, finally, alienated from the Jews because he belonged to a community composed entirely of assimilated "Scheinjuden". Socially cut off, resigned to remaining a bachelor, a man who almost seems to thrive on being

alone and yet longs for company - such is the friend in Russia. Georg wonders whether or not he should try to mould such a man into the regular pattern of his own existence by making him abandon the failing business in Russia and come home to his friends and family. His analysis of the friend's position corresponds to Kafka's lists of the pros and cons of marriage. In making Georg ask: "Sollte man ihm vielleicht raten, wieder nach Hause zu kommen, seine Existenz hierherzuverlegen, alle die alten freundschaftlichen Beziehungen wiederaufzunehmen - wofür ja kein Hindernis bestand - und im übrigen auf die Hilfe der Freunde zu vertrauen?" Kafka asks himself: "Should I abandon my writing, get married and settle down in a remunerative and secure position?" Georg Bendemann has already made his decision, but is not happy as to the effect it will have on his bachelor friend. He is embarrassed at having to tell him of his engagement and also conceals his business success, fearing that the news of either might alienate his friend completely. Thus the fiancée's words: "Er wird also gar nicht zu unserer Hochzeit kommen. Wenn du solche Freunde hast, Georg, hättest du dich überhaupt nicht verloben sollen", which make very little sense in the narrative, become clear when taken symbolically to mean: marriage and writing cannot go hand in hand. To keep the one, the other must be sacrificed. Georg Bendemann has already sacrificed his friend in Russia in effect, for his invitation to the wedding, though diplomatic, is weak and unconvincing:

> Ich weiß, es hält Dich vielerlei von einem Besuche bei uns zurück, wäre aber nicht gerade meine Hochzeit die richtige Gelegenheit, einmal alle Hindernisse über den Haufen zu werfen? Aber wie dies auch sein mag, handle ohne alle Rücksicht und nur nach Deiner Wohlmeinung. (10)

The scene is now set. The decision to marry and to continue life as a successful business man in his father's firm has been taken. Georg's complete inability to sustain that decision begins to become apparent when he enters his father's bedroom.

The gradual disintegration of the outer and "unreal" Georg, the breakthrough of reality, already complete in the first sentence of "Die Verwandlung", begins at this point. Georg is ignorant of the issues involved in what seems to him a natural step towards happiness. In wanting to marry, he has betrayed his friend in Russia, that is to say, his true self, neglected his father and, because of his purely sexual motivation, shamed his mother's memory. It is for his father to point out these things to him and to pass judgement upon his "devilish" son.

Georg's manner alters noticeably when he comes into his father's presence. His self-confidence disappears. He becomes nervous, embarrassed and forgetful, is scarcely able to speak and cowers in a corner. Such was the effect of Hermann Kafka's overawing personality upon <u>his</u> neurotic son:

> Ich bekam vor Dir .... eine stockende, stotternde Art des Sprechens, auch das war Dir noch zu viel, schließlich schwieg ich, zuerst vielleicht aus Trotz, dann, weil ich vor Dir weder reden noch denken konnte. (11)

Georg is also obsessed with his father's physical size and strength:

> "Mein Vater ist noch immer ein Riese", sagte sich Georg, "Wie er hier breit sitzt und die Arme über der Brust kreuzt." (11a)

Similarly, Kafka writes in the "Brief an den Vater":

> Ich war ja schon niedergedrückt durch Deine bloße Körperlichkeit . . . In Deinem Lehnstuhl regiertest Du die Welt. (12)

Outwardly, then, old Bendemann is a literary version of Hermann Kafka. In him we see the overpowering, peremptory will of tyrannical authority, of the physical and mental giant. Yet the analogy is only complete in these external details, for if we accept that the Russian friend stands for Kafka the writer, then the father's alliance with him, his "Ich war sein Vertreter hier am Ort" becomes absurd. Hermann Kafka was something more than indifferent to his son's vocation. He looked upon it as a useless, perhaps even effeminate way of wasting time:

> Richtiger trafst Du mit Deiner Abneigung mein Schreiben und was, Dir unbekannt, damit zusammenhing. Meine Eitelkeit, mein Ehrgeiz litten zwar unter Deiner für uns berühmt gewordenen Begrüßung meiner Bücher: "Leg's auf den Nachttisch." (13)

There is, however, no real discrepancy. In the same paragraph from the letter, Kafka writes:

> Mein Schreiben handelte von Dir, ich klagte dort ja nur, was ich an Deiner Brust nicht klagen konnte. Es war ein absichtlich in die Länge gezogener Abschied von Dir, nur daß er zwar von Dir erzwungen war, aber in der von mir bestimmten Richtung verlief. (14)

In this light the father can be seen as the essential prerequisite to all of Kafka's writing, a force which, by its very antagonism, furthers the activity it wishes to destroy. In a sketch which Kafka wrote in

February 1911, "Die städtische Welt", a sketch very similar in tone to "Das Urteil", the son Oskar says to his father:

> Alles, was du gegen mich sagst, hilft meinen Ideen, sie hören nicht auf, stark werdend füllen sie mir den Kopf. (14a)

Moreover, in his opposition to each of Franz's attempts to marry, Hermann Kafka made it easier for his son to remain true to his writing. "Marriage and writing cannot go hand in hand. To keep the one, the other must be sacrificed." Old Bendemann's moralistic attitude to his son's treatment of the friend in Russia has no biographical foundation and can be understood only as a very generous gesture by Kafka in putting down the father's opposition to his marriage to such noble motives when, in fact, those "noble motives" were nothing more than an unconscious side-effect, or perhaps as a projection of Kafka's own feelings of guilt and insecurity at the thought of what would become of his writing if he were to get married. Here it is a question of an unfulfilled duty to the self. Since Kafka was simply incapable of distinguishing in his mind between personal and justifiable pangs of conscience and the sense of guilt which he received from his father-judge, there is really nothing strange in this self-castigation through his father's mouth.

The father's further accusation that, in wanting to marry, Georg has shamed his mother's memory, is a reflection of Hermann Kafka's complete misunderstanding of his son's personality and of the forces which compelled him throughout his life to seek happiness and independence by marrying and having children of his own. In the "Brief an den Vater" Kafka summarizes his conception of marriage and his personal motivation in seeking a wife:

> Heiraten, eine Familie gründen, alle Kinder, welche kommen, hinnehmen, in dieser unsicheren Welt erhalten und gar noch ein wenig führen, ist meiner Überzeugung nach das Äußerste, das einem Menschen überhaupt gelingen kann. Der Grundgedanke beider Heiratsversuche war ganz korrekt: einen Hausstand gründen, selbstständig werden. (15)

Although, as we shall see in Chapter V, Kafka fails to provide a satisfactory or accurate explanation of his failure to marry, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of these words which are unconditionally supported by his biographers and friends. Hermann Kafka was either incapable of understanding such reasons, or perversely ignored them, in order to antagonise his son. In "Das Urteil" Georg's father accuses him of not being able to resist the deliberate sexuality of his fiancée, ignoring the possibility that his son might be in love:

> Weil sie die Röcke so und so und so gehoben hat, hast du dich an sie herangemacht, und damit du an ihr ohne Störung dich befriedigen kannst, hast du unserer Mutter Andenken geschändet, den Freund verraten und deinen Vater ins Bett gesteckt, damit er sich nicht rühren kann. (16)

The similarity of this scene to the following actual occurrence cannot be mistaken:

> Ich meine damit eine kleine Aussprache an einem der paar aufgeregten Tage nach Mitteilung meiner letzten Heiratsabsicht. Du sagtest zu mir etwa: "Sie hat wahrscheinlich irgendeine ausgesuchte Bluse angezogen, wie das die Prager Jüdinnen verstehen, und daraufhin hast Du Dich natürlich entschlossen, sie zu heiraten. Und zwar möglichst rasch, in einer Woche, morgen, heute." (17)

Psychologically there is, however, nothing strange whatsoever in the father's attacks upon the son. They can be explained as the resentment of the old for the young, as sexual jealousy or - and this Kafka himself believed - as the result of ignorance and misunderstanding. What is strange is that Georg accepts the judgement, although rationally he knows it to be unjust. The mingling of his own feelings of guilt with the father's actual words suggests that Kafka found it impossible to ignore his father's opinions, however irrational, that, for him, there could be no question of his father being wrong. The very failure of his attempts to become independent is evidence of the hold which the tyrannical old man had upon him. Brod's fundamental question: "Wozu hat Kafka seinen Vater gebraucht? Oder: warum hat er sich von ihm nicht losmachen können, obwohl er ihm kritisch gegenüberstand?"(18) is answered by Kafka himself:

> Ich fühle beim Vater das Dasein einer Weisheit, von der ich nur einen Atemzug erfassen kann. (19)

It is his father's power over him, the futility of trying to escape and his own all-pervading sense of guilt that forms the basis of the "Brief an den Vater":

> Ich stand ja in allem meinen Denken unter Deinem schweren Druck, auch in dem Denken, das nicht mit dem Deinen übereinstimmte und besonders in diesem. Alle diese von Dir scheinbar unabhängigen Gedanken waren von Anfang an belastet mit Deinem absprechenden Urteil; bis zur vollständigen und dauernden Ausführung des Gedankens das zu ertragen, war fast unmöglich. (20)

Only in this light does the composite father-son figure in "Das

Urteil" make sense. His judgements are Kafka's own almost masochistic judgements upon himself, while the external description is of the father. In "Das Urteil", Georg's conscience - his consciousness of neglected duties to himself and to others - which he has been repressing, reappears with dramatic effect. The Freudian theory of the inevitable return of the repressed, which is of considerable importance for a complete understanding of Kafka's works and which provides a more accurate description of his technique than does Emrich's hypothesis of the breakthrough of "die höchste Realität", will be discussed in Chapters III and V.

Old Bendemann, then, is not mad, as Magny would have it; he is omniscient. His judgement is both rational and inevitable. Significantly, the mother in the story is dead. Georg is left alone with his father, cut off from the support and mediation which he might have expected from her. Of his mother, Kafka wrote:

> Wenn schon Deine Erziehung in irgendeinem unwahrscheinlichen Fall mich durch Erzeugung von Trotz, Abneigung oder gar Haß auf eigene Füße hätte stellen können, so glich das die Mutter durch Gutsein, durch vernünftige Rede, durch Fürbitte wieder aus. Oder es war so, daß es zu keiner eigentlichen Versöhnung kam, daß die Mutter mich vor Dir bloß im Geheimen schützte. (21)

With the death of the mother there can be no hiding-place. The judgement is final and irrevocable, for to Georg the father represents "die letzte Instanz".

The accusation of having wanted to get rid of his father, represented in the story by Georg's words: "Sei nur ruhig, du bist gut zugedeckt", can again be best understood as a manifestation of Kafka's

personal sense of guilt, of his ambivalent love-hate attitude to the father. It is reasonable to assume that his frustration in being unable to escape from his father's grip was accompanied by feelings of hate, which could not be repressed. In October 1911, Kafka wrote in his diaries:

> Ich habe mich geradezu in Haß gegen meinen Vater hinein= geschrieben. (22)

Georg, while adoring his father, sees him as a hindrance to all his plans to become independent. He resents his continued presence in the business, has clearly been neglecting him at home and secretly hopes that he may kill himself: "Jetzt wird er sich vorbeugen, dachte Georg, wenn er fiele und zerschmetterte! Dieses Wort durchzischte seinen Kopf." Georg's sense of guilt is evident in his over-anxiety for his father's welfare, once his father accuses him of deliberate deceit. His accusation is, in fact, Kafka's own confession of guilt both for having wished his father dead and, in his love for writing, neglected his family duties. Georg's smugness in having so successfully built up the business receives a further blow when the father accuses him of parasitism:

> Und mein Sohn ging in Jubel durch die Welt, schloß Geschäfte ab, die ich vorbereitet hatte, überpurzelte sich vor Vergnügen und ging vor seinem Vater mit dem verschlossenen Gesicht eines Ehrenmannes davon. (23)

Kafka himself was never allowed to forget that all that he had came from his father. Interference in the business met with jealousy and the accusation: "Now you are stealing the fruits of my labour":

> Seit jeher machtest Du mir immer zum Vorwurf, daß ich dank Deiner Arbeit ohne alle Entbehrungen in Ruhe, Wärme, Fülle lebte. (24)

Thus guilt is the theme of "Das Urteil" and not merely Kafka's inner conflict upon meeting F.B. The wish to get married is the starting point, the excuse for a masochistic wallowing in guilt and, with it, the release from speculation and uncertainty that comes with final damnation. Perhaps the most valuable passage from Kate Flores' analysis of the story is this:

> In "Das Urteil" Kafka is judged; but he does not allow himself that comfort again. For the ecstasy of attaining his ultimate self-justification before his father by executing his sentence is not to be compared to the ecstasy of the hopeless, the preposterous, but unendable quest. (25)

How easily understood is Georg's apparently fantastic and unnecessary suicide in the light of these words from the diaries:

> Ist nicht durch Vaters Macht die Ausweisung so stark gewesen, daß ihr (nicht mir) nichts widerstehen konnte? (26)

Together "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung" form an apology for Kafka's writing. In the one he demonstrates the impossibility of marriage, in the other the impossibility of leading the life of a small bureaucrat. The works are thus complementary.

One final point must be made: in a sense, the father's judgement

is justified by the events of the story, for Georg is not murdered but commits suicide. Thus, even in this, the earliest of Kafka's completed works, the driving force is not the father but the hero's own bad conscience. In this at least, "Das Urteil" anticipates almost every major work by Kafka.

Conclusion

"Das Urteil" is an incoherent diary-jotting rather than a work of literature. The autobiographical basis of the story is Kafka's meeting with F.B. and his subsequent fear of the effect which marriage would have upon his literary career. Kafka regards both marriage and the pursuance of his literary vocation as personal duties and castigates himself through the father for his failure to fulfil either. In theme and technique "Das Urteil" anticipates almost every other work. The obsession with personal guilt, the bad conscience of the hero, is an early manifestation of the spiritual masochism which appears in "Der Prozeß" and in "In der Strafkolonie".

C H A P T E R III

"Die Verwandlung"

Kafka wrote "Die Verwandlung" in November 1912, less than two months after he had completed "Das Urteil". Yet in this short space of time his narrative technique appears to have improved almost beyond recognition, to have gained the objectivity necessary to create literature out of diary-jottings. Both works are essentially autobiographical. They refer to specific crises in Kafka's own life and make full use of actual situations and people in virtually undisguised form. But whereas in "Das Urteil" the story is given second place to the personalities in it, so that the work reads like a case-history of neurosis, "Die Verwandlung" is a controlled narrative which can be enjoyed, if not fully understood, without the aid of a biographic key. Both stories have something of the fantastic in them; both end with the macabre death of the principal character. Yet while we would normally accept the idea of a man's committing suicide more readily than his transformation overnight into a monstrous insect, Gregor Samsa's death comes as far less of a shock to us than does Georg Bendemann's. The conception of "Das Urteil" is dramatic enough, but its execution is formless. Georg's suicide appears almost as an afterthought, too late to save the story from chaotic shapelessness. The reader is startled, confused and bewildered, but certainly not convinced.

"Die Verwandlung", on the other hand, is a strangely credible nightmare, horrifying not only because of the event itself, but because it stirs in the reader's heart the uneasy feeling that the world is not so certain, so predictable as to make such a happening impossible. Paul Landsberg writes:

> In our customary certainty of the identity of our being and world in general, there is just enough of artificiality,

> enough will, enough fragility so that Kafka's fiction touches an unacknowledged but anguishing reality, nourished from sources deeper than those of rational reflection and scientific knowledge. (1)

"Die Verwandlung" thus presents the reader with the reality of Gregor Samsa's transformation - "Es war kein Traum" - and from that point leads him through a perfectly logical, coherent and compelling narration. Kafka has for the first time successfully transformed the material of his own life into literature. Yet an author does not gain the ability to universalise his experiences overnight. The improvement in Kafka's narrative technique is perhaps less real than apparent, for he was simply incapable of handling the subject either of his father or of his impending marriage with any degree of objectivity. His dilemma concerning his profession, on the other hand, involved issues which, though pressing, had far less to do with the complexity of his personal relationships. Kafka's own attitude to the two stories indicates just how deeply immersed he was in "Das Urteil" and how little enthusiasm he felt for "Die Verwandlung". Of "Das Urteil" he writes: "Die Geschichte ist wie eine regelrechte Geburt mit Schmutz und Schleim bedeckt aus mir herausgekommen",(2) while he describes "Die Verwandlung" as "unvollkommen fast bis in den Grund".(3) This involvement in the subject-matter of "Das Urteil", this enthusiasm for its creation gives at least an indication of the reason for its formlessness, but there is a margin of improvement in "Die Verwandlung" which cannot be put down to objectivity alone and which must remain unexplained.

The connecting link between "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung" is Kafka's writing. The two works are in fact complementary - parts one and two of the author's logical demonstration that "no man can serve two masters, for he will hate the one and love the other." Kafka loved his writing and hated anything that threatened its existence. It was partly for this reason that he abandoned his marriage-plans and that he found his profession unbearable. Just as he had tried in "Das Urteil" to show that marriage and literature could not live amicably side by side, so "Die Verwandlung" was an attempt to show the ultimate effect of continuing in a career which was making the severest demands on both his mental and physical health, and was, at the same time, a plea to his parents for a respite in which he might dedicate himself fully to his true interests. That plea was to fall on deaf ears.

To a less devoted son the problem would certainly not have been so acute, but Kafka felt himself in duty bound to provide financial support for his family, a feeling which stemmed not only from his neurotic belief that he must somehow justify his existence before his father, but is inherent in the whole tradition of Jewish family life. It is difficult to make any final judgement as to whether or not the Kafka family were in so favourable a financial position as to allow their son the life of undisturbed leisure which was apparently essential to his creative genius. Max Brod is sure that they were:

> Denn es galt als abgemacht, daß er den Eltern nicht einen Tag länger als nötig auf der Tasche liegen würde. Das hätte ja auch der Vater nicht begriffen und als allerärgste Zumutung

> angesehen. Wie gesagt: die Frage stand gar nicht zur Diskussion, ob dem außergewöhnlich begabten Sohn (aber war denn seine Begabung den Eltern klar, war sie überhaupt hervor=getreten?) nicht eine außergewöhnliche Freiheit, etwa eine Reihe von Studienjahren im Ausland, zugebilligt werden solle. Die materiellen Voraussetzungen der Familie waren damals günstig genug. (4)

Brod's picture of the Kafka family's financial circumstances is perhaps a little one-sided, and it is difficult to believe that Hermann Kafka was quite the "Scrooge" that he makes him out to be. One can scarcely reconcile Brod's description of a bloated and miserly capitalist and of his penniless son with the following diary-entry from 1911:

> Morgen soll ich nach Italien fahren. Jetzt abends konnte der Vater vor Aufregung nicht einschlafen, da er ganz von der Sorge um das Geschäft und von seiner dadurch aufgeweckten Krank=heit ergriffen war ... Es ist klar, daß, von ihm aus gesehn, seine Sorgen durch uns nicht abgenommen und nicht einmal erleichtert werden, aber selbst von uns aus gesehn nicht, selbst in unserem besten Willen steckt noch etwas von der so traurigen Überzeugung, daß er für seine Familie sorgen muß . . . Die arme Mutter will morgen zum Hausherrn bitten gehn. (5)

It might further be argued that Franz was not asked to support his family, merely to support himself. And could his parents really be expected to sympathise with their son's hypersensitive refusal to take financial advantage of his "exceptional gift"? Brod apparently does not realise that in saying "aber war denn seine Begabung den Eltern klar, war sie überhaupt hervorgetreten?" he takes away all responsibility from them for the agonies

which Kafka suffered in his job, since they were guilty not of any deliberate malice but simply of misunderstanding. Similarly, in "Die Verwandlung", the Samsa family are not guilty of any crime against Gregor, but fail to recognise that there is a side to him which, in his concern for their welfare, he has been neglecting. And indeed how could they have known, for of both Franz and of Gregor it may be said: "Darin mag man seine tragische Schuld finden. Er litt und schwieg."(6)

In 1906, Brod and Kafka began the long search for conditions of employment which would give them sufficient free time to pursue their literary careers:

> Was wir beide mit heißer Inbrunst anstrebten, war ein Posten mit "einfacher Frequenz" - also Dienst von früh bis 2 oder 3 Uhr mittags und nachmittags frei. Posten im Privatdienst, die vormittags und nachmittags Dienststunden hatten, ließen vom Tag nichts Zusammenhängendes mehr für literarische Arbeit, Spaziergänge, Lektüre, Theater u.s.w. (7)

Two years later, in 1908, Kafka found the longed-for job in the "Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt für das Königreich Böhmen in Prag", but his dreams of uninterrupted creation were soon shattered. Even the meagre demands of his position proved too much for his frail constitution. Constant exhaustion, sleeplessness and headaches led to the despairing outbursts which fill the diaries in these early years:

> Wie ich heute aus dem Bett steigen wollte, bin ich einfach zusammengeklappt. Es hat einen sehr einfachen Grund, ich bin vollkommen überarbeitet. Nun ist es eben für mich ein schreckliches Doppelleben, aus dem es wahrscheinlich nur den Irrsinn als Ausweg gibt. (8)

This was not all. By Jewish tradition the father, who has given all for his children, expects his son to follow him into his business. Hermann Kafka was no exception. His factory and shop were in constant need of supervision and for this help he turned to Franz. Kafka found himself in the usual ambivalent position: hating the strain and tedium which this kind of work forced upon him and yet plagued by his already oversensitive Jewish conscience with the idea that only a wastrel would refuse to help his parents, no matter what the cost to his own health. Thus with the conflicting demands of office, factory and literature ever before him, Kafka could find only the most unattractive solutions:

> Als heute abend die Mutter also wieder mit der alten Klage anfing, sah ich vollkommen klar ein, daß es für mich jetzt nur zwei Möglichkeiten gab, entweder nach dem allgemeinen Schlafengehen aus dem Fenster zu springen oder in den nächsten vierzehn Tagen täglich in die Fabrik und in das Bureau des X. zu gehen. (9)

In April 1911, Kafka was given an interview by the anthroposophist Dr. Rudolph Steiner which, though it proved of little help to the author himself, provides the biographer with an excellent summary of his dilemma at the time:

> Ich bin daher Beamter in einer sozialen Versicherungsanstalt geworden. Nun können diese zwei Berufe einander niemals ertragen und ein gemeinsames Glück zulassen. Das kleinste Glück in einem wird ein großes Unglück im zweiten. Im Bureau genüge ich äußerlich meinen Pflichten, meinen inneren Pflichten aber nicht, und jede nichterfüllte innere Pflicht wird zu einem Unglück, das sich aus mir nicht mehr rührt. (10)

Such unfulfilled inner duties lie at the root of Gregor Samsa's transformation, just as they were the cause of Kafka's own years of unhappiness as an insurance official. Yet the obvious parallel between Kafka's situation and his hero's, a parallel which serves to unravel completely what is superficially Kafka's most enigmatic short story, has never been fully developed by the Kafka critics, who preferred, perhaps, to wander the more intriguing byways of metaphysical and psychological obscurity.

In Chapter II we suggested that the hero of "Das Urteil" is unexpectedly condemned by his own conscience, at a time when he is least aware of having done anything wrong and is self-confidently embarking upon plans for his marriage and for an expansion of his father's business. It must be clear that this situation recurs in essence in "Die Verwandlung", for Kafka opens his narrative with the words:

> Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt. (11)

Samsa has, in fact, already ceased to be a commercial traveller, the sole support of his family. His "unreal" existence was prior to the beginning of the story and is described only in his thoughts, in the "flash-back" or "Rahmen"-technique of the modern cinema. Samsa's attitude to his job is clear from the beginning. He is overworked to the point of

exhaustion and anxious to give the whole thing up:

> "Ach Gott", dachte er, "was für einen anstrengenden Beruf habe ich gewählt! Tagaus, tagein auf der Reise. Die geschäftlichen Aufregungen sind viel größer als im eigentlichen Geschäft zu Hause. Der Teufel soll das alles holen!" (12)

Yet it has taken the transformation to draw this rebellious outcry from him, for Gregor has been the most conscientious of workers, not from any love of his position, but from fear of the possibility of losing it. Gregor hates his work, his colleagues and his employers. The work is arduous, his colleagues are nothing more than dishonest lechers, his employers suspicious and overdemanding. As a result he has become a bundle of neurotic resentments, himself suspicious and cowering before even the most insignificant employee. Yet there is a note of envy in his criticism of the other commercial travellers, the unexpressed desire to live their life, perhaps even to be accepted into their company:

> Andere Reisende leben wie Haremsfrauen. Wenn ich zum Beispiel im Laufe des Vormittags ins Gasthaus zurückgehe, um die erlangten Aufträge zu überschreiben, sitzen diese Herren erst beim Frühstück. Das sollte ich bei meinem Chef versuchen; ich würde auf der Stelle hinausfliegen. (13)

This is a typical example of Gregor's manner of life - one long conflict between desire and action. Similarly, his remarks about the chief are reminiscent of the familiar comic scene in which the employee rehearses his manly tirade before the mirror and then stands quivering and speechless in the presence of his employer:

> Wenn ich mich nicht wegen meiner Eltern zurückhielte, ich hätte längst gekündigt, ich wäre vor den Chef hingetreten und hätte ihm meine Meinung von Grund des Herzens aus gesagt. Vom Pult hätte er fallen müssen! (14)

Samsa feels that he is being persecuted, and not without reason for although, like few others, he suffers from pangs of conscience for having wasted a few hours of the firm's time, he is hounded down by senior officials at the very first sign of weakness or laxity:

> Warum war nur Gregor dazu verurteilt, bei einer Firma zu dienen, wo man bei der kleinsten Versäumnis gleich den größten Verdacht faßte? Waren denn alle Angestellten samt und sonders Lumpen, gab es denn unter ihnen keinen treuen, ergebenen Menschen, der, wenn er auch nur ein paar Morgenstunden für das Geschäft nicht ausgenützt hatte, vor Gewissensbissen närrisch wurde und geradezu nicht imstande war, das Bett zu verlassen? (15)

Such is Gregor's position: hating his work, but bound to it by the need to provide for his family, the sole consideration which has prevented him from abandoning the whole detested business. Gregor is a conscientious worker and an overconscientious son. Each feeling of rebellion is pushed into the background by the same thought: "Wenn ich mich nicht wegen meiner Eltern zurückhielte."(16) With these words ever in his ears, he has plunged himself into a state of complete self-abnegation for a family who, though he never fully realises it, neither care for his sacrifice nor understand it. But Gregor himself fails to recognise that, in trying to provide for his parents he has repressed his true being. He is completely unaware of the cause of the malaise which shows itself in his

"unruhige Träume", for through constant neglect of his own will, he has lost sight of its very existence. To him the business world has become the one reality to which all else must be sacrificed. The meaning of the transformation - the breakthrough of his repressed and degenerated ego - is thus as incomprehensible to him as it is to his family. He therefore attempts to shrug off the whole affair as a stupid delusion:

> "Wie wäre es denn, wenn ich noch ein wenig weiterschliefe und alle Narrheiten vergäße", dachte er. (17)

This is, in fact, just what he has been doing throughout the years: putting off the decision to act in accordance with his own will, in the hope that it may some day prove compatible with his desire to support his parents. But that day is never likely to come and the self refuses to wait any longer.

Whether or not Kafka was aware of it,[18] he had, in "Die Verwandlung", presented the reader with a perfect, if rather fantastic example of the psychological phenomenon of repression, which Jung and Freud were developing in 1912. Jung defines repression as an illegitimate way of evading conflict, which means pretending to oneself that it does not exist. He states that a repressed conflict must continue to exist, even though not conscious to the subject, and that it must reappear somewhere.[19]

Gregor Samsa's "repressed conflict", the conflict between duty and

desire "reappears" in startling and horrific form. Yet he still refuses to look reality in the face. His attitude is symptomatic of his neurotic desire to avoid the issue at all cost. To this end he attempts to rationalise the whole affair into non-existence:

> Er erinnerte sich, schon öfters im Bett irgendeinem, vielleicht durch ungeschicktes Liegen erzeugten, leichten Schmerz empfunden zu haben, der sich dann beim Aufstehen als reine Einbildung herausstellte, und er war gespannt, wie sich seine heutigen Vorstellungen allmählich auflösen würden. Daß die Veränderung der Stimme nichts anderes war als der Vorbote einer tüchtigen Verkühlung, einer Berufskrankheit der Reisenden, daran zweifelte er nicht im geringsten. (20)

Thus, the beetle in "Die Verwandlung" symbolises the inner self, "die höchste Realität", misshapen and contorted by years of neglect.

The transformation is, at the same time, a merciful release from the burden of responsibility which for years has stunted Gregor's spiritual growth and destroyed his hopes of independence. The repression of conflict, Jung has said, is often accompanied by regression, by the desire for a return to a state of complete irresponsibility - childhood, lunacy or death, and it is interesting that these last two were among Kafka's own solutions to his personal dilemma. Gregor Samsa lacks the strength to assert his own will, but is at the same time incapable of controlling it. Where there is no solution, death removes the problem altogether. Paul Landsberg writes:

> The metamorphosis of a civilized man into first a coleopteron, perfect example of an instinctive and almost automatic being and finally into a simple bit of matter, portrays, in its successive stages man's instinct for death, the desire for a return to the inorganic, of which Freud has shown the power in the human subconscious. (21)

Yet it is important to realise that Gregor's is an involuntary release. He does not, like Raban, the hero of "Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande", will his transformation. Certainly he feels uneasy in his business life and even curses his employers, but at the same time he makes every effort to remain in favour. Far from having willed the metamorphosis, he experiences it as something strange and disturbing, something that has happened against his will, "das mit ihm geschehen war". From this standpoint Frederick J. Hoffman's interpretation of "Die Verwandlung" seems a little far-fetched. Basing his views entirely on the often misleading "Brief an den Vater", Hoffman seems to suggest that in Gregor's transformation we may see his punishment for some objective personal guilt:

> Just as Gregor has somehow willed the metamorphosis - it is his crime and responsibility - so he must will to die, to remove the shame which it has caused his family. He must, in other words, remove himself from the consciousness of his family, in atonement for having thought and willed independently of it. The metamorphosis is thus a symbol of man's wilful denial of authority. That this authority is absurd or unreasonable, does not alter the circumstances or reduce the guilt. (22)

But Gregor Samsa's "guilt" could scarcely have played any rôle in his transformation, since in his previous life he had no reason to feel guilty at all. We have already seen that Gregor's fault was over-conscientiousness, that he was an ideal son, so that the metamorphosis cannot be "a symbol of man's wilful denial of authority" but of the dangers of the sacrifice of individuality in the face of authority. If a sense of guilt lies at the root of Gregor's transformation, he dies not from that guilt but

from neglect, from the realisation that his parents cannot accept the reality which the metamorphosis has brought to light. For Gregor life is impossible on any level. He may neither deny his inner nature nor act in accordance with it. Thus, in dying, he releases his family from the painful and unacceptable knowledge of his true being, and himself from further torture. As in "Das Urteil" the world passes by as if nothing had happened, "denn nur durch Lüge kann die Welt weiterbestehen".

It is, perhaps, easier to identify the Kafka family in the characters of "Die Verwandlung" than to establish the exact meaning of the story. The difficulty lies not in recognition but in avoiding tedious repetition, for Kafka's portrayal of his family throughout the early works is so consistent that the minor characters could easily be interchanged without noticeable alteration in the narrative. In keeping with Kafka's experimental technique, the father at the beginning of the story is weak and helpless, an invalid who, like Bendemann in "Das Urteil", has with age delegated the responsibilities of supporting the family to his son. From the start his attitude to Gregor's transformation is more antagonistic than that of the rest of the family, for he sees in it not some illness or incredible tragedy, but a piece of deliberate malice:

> "Ich habe es ja erwartet," sagte der Vater, "ich habe es euch ja immer gesagt, aber ihr Frauen wollt nicht hören." Gregor war es klar, daß der Vater Gretes allzu kurze Mitteilung schlecht gedeutet hatte und annahm, daß Gregor sich irgendeine Gewalttat habe zuschulden kommen lassen. (23)

The father's "transformation" - his return to the state of power and authority which he has so unwillingly abandoned - is almost as dramatic as that of his son:

> War das noch der Vater? Der gleiche Mann, der müde im Bett vergraben lag, wenn früher Gregor zu einer Geschäftsreise ausgerückt war? Nun aber war er recht gut aufgerichtet; in eine straffe blaue Uniform mit Goldknöpfen gekleidet, wie sie Diener der Bankinstitute tragen. Über dem hohen, steifen Kragen des Rockes entwickelte sich sein starkes Doppelkinn; unter den buschigen Augenbrauen drang der Blick der schwarzen Augen frisch und aufmerksam hervor. (24)

Here, then, we see the familiar, exaggerated picture of Hermann Kafka, tyrannical giant; the same obsession with his physical size and power that appears in "Das Urteil" and the "Brief an den Vater". Yet the father's rôle in "Die Verwandlung" should not be overestimated. Kafka had already delved fully into this relationship in "Das Urteil" and could scarcely have used the same material so soon in another work. A more important factor in "Die Verwandlung" is the family's inability to understand the son. Thus, while each member retains his characteristic features, no one is of particular importance. Gregor Samsa's father is violent and aggressive, as was Hermann Kafka. The author makes use of these qualities in bringing about Gregor's physical destruction, but there the father's importance ends.

Similarly, the mother is only important as a member of the family. As in real life, she is closest to the son, well-meaning but ineffectual as a result of her bond with the father. It is she who best expresses the family's complete misconception of Gregor's inner needs and of his attitude

to his work in particular:

> "Ihm ist nicht wohl", sagte die Mutter zum Prokuristen, "Wie würde denn Gregor sonst einen Zug versäumen! Der Junge hat ja nichts im Kopf als das Geschäft. Ich ärgere mich fast, daß er abends niemals ausgeht. Da sitzt er bei uns am Tisch und liest still die Zeitung oder studiert Fahrpläne." (25)

Yet the mother alone retains her love for Gregor throughout the story and the hope that he may be miraculously cured. Ultimately, however, she is bound more closely to her husband than to her son, so that with the father's second attack upon Gregor, she finds herself in the paradoxical position of embracing her husband, while pleading for the son, whom he is trying to kill:

> Gregor sah ... wie sie stolpernd über die Röcke auf den Vater eindrang und ihn umarmend, in gänzlicher Vereinigung mit ihm, die Hände an des Vaters Hinterkopf um Schonung von Gregors Leben bat. (26)

This recalls Kafka's own analysis of his mother's position in the family in the "Brief an den Vater":

> Man konnte bei ihr zwar immer Schutz finden, doch nur in Beziehung zu Dir. Zu sehr liebte sie Dich und war Dir zu sehr treu ergeben, als daß sie in dem Kampf des Kindes eine selbst= ständige geistige Macht für die Dauer hätte sein können. (27)

By far the most interesting figure in "Die Verwandlung" is the sister Grete, who, in her intelligence, self-will and cool ability to cope with the most difficult situations, closely resembles the author's own

sister, Ottla Kafka. Yet when Gregor's world collapses around him, she proves a less reliable ally, a person with far less sympathy than one would have expected to find in a literary presentation of Ottla Kafka. Her interest in Gregor's welfare has something morbidly unhealthy in it, the interest of a zoo-keeper, who guards a most unusual beast and jealously shares in its reflected glory, however unsavoury:

> Dabei wachte sie mit einer an ihr ganz neuen Empfindlich= keit, die überhaupt die ganze Familie ergriffen hatte, darüber, daß das Aufräumen von Gregors Zimmer ihr vorbehalten blieb. (28)

Grete is the only one in the story to change her attitude to Gregor. At first kind and helpful, she eventually voices the whole family's opinion that this "object" cannot be Gregor and that no good can come from believing that it is:

> "Weg muß er", rief die Schwester, "das ist das einzige Mittel, Vater. Du mußt bloß den Gedanken loszuwerden versuchen, daß es Gregor ist. Daß wir es solange geglaubt haben, das ist ja unser eigentliches Unglück." (29)

Whilst there is always a danger in biographical criticism of finding parallels which do not in fact exist, this impression of Grete is not unlike the description of Ottla which Kafka gives in the "Brief an den Vater". Though Ottla was very much on her brother's side, one wonders whether such a strong personality might not have come eventually to despise the weakness of such a vulnerable and ineffectual person as Franz. Certainly Ottla had all the stamina and drive of her father:

> Hier war etwas wie eine Art Löwy, ausgestattet mit den besten Kafka'schen Waffen. Ihr zwei waret immer in Kampf= stellung, immer frisch, immer bei Kräften. (30)

With such natures it would scarcely have been surprising if father and daughter had united in one overwhelming attack upon the frail, aesthetic son. Kafka was on uncertain ground with Ottla and it is this uncertainty which he expresses in "Die Verwandlung":

> Ich kann mir sogar denken, daß sie in ihrem Wesen eine Zeitlang geschwankt hat, ob sie sich Dir an die Brust werfen soll oder den Gegnern. Ihr wäret, wenn es eben möglich gewesen wäre, ein prachtvolles Paar an Eintracht geworden. (31)

It is around the sister that the more positive element of "Die Verwandlung" revolves, for Gregor's secret plan to send her to the Conservatoire has been his only vaguely independent thought. This assertion of his own will represents the stirrings of unknown and latent yearnings for a higher and more spiritual existence; yearnings that are suddenly released at the sound of his sister's violin-playing:

> War er ein Tier, da ihn Musik so ergriff? Ihm war, als zeige sich ihm der Weg zu der ersehnten unbekannten Nahrung. (32)

Gregor's inner life has become stunted through neglect, but not entirely. The metamorphosis - the release from imprisonment of Gregor's leprous soul - comes too late for a cure to be effected, but at least a part has not been contaminated. As that part is stirred back into life by music, Gregor is forced into an awareness of the barren life that he has led in the past, and of the inner and deeper needs which he has neglected.

Ultimately, it makes very little difference whether one speaks of Samsa's transformation as the breakthrough of a higher reality, of his inner self or of conscience, but Kafka's use of the term "innere Pflichten" does perhaps suggest that "conscience" is the most satisfactory word: not, however, conscience in the usual meaning of the word, but a consciousness of neglected duties to the self. If Kafka expresses a sense of guilt in "Die Verwandlung" it is not towards his father - neither this work nor "Das Urteil" may be seen as resulting purely from a father-fixation - but towards his writing and thus towards himself.

If "Die Verwandlung" is more readable than "Das Urteil", it is not merely because of its form or the universality of its theme, but because it has humour. Subjectivism, intensity and self-analysis provide the fundamental materials for much that is admired in modern literature, but they are the enemies of humour. The most striking developments in "Die Verwandlung" are to be seen in the minor characters: the chief clerk, the lodgers and the charwoman, accurately observed caricatures, the more recognisable through exaggeration. Kafka's humour is macabre, appearing at the most horrific points in the story, tastelessly like a joke at a funeral. But it relieves the tension of constant neurotic analysis, that is so typical of Kafka and brings the reader gratefully back to earth:

> Als am frühen Morgen die Bedienerin kam, fand sie bei ihrem gewöhnlichen kurzen Besuch an Gregor zuerst nichts besonderes.

Sie dachte er liege absichtlich so unbeweglich da und spiele den Beleidigten; sie traute ihm allen möglichen Verstand zu. Weil sie zufällig den langen Besen in der Hand hielt, suchte sie mit ihm Gregor von der Tür aus zu kitzeln. Als sich auch da kein Erfolg zeigte, wurde sie ärgerlich und stieß ein wenig in Gregor hinein, und erst als sie ihn ohne jeden Widerstand von seinem Platz geschoben hatte, wurde sie aufmerksam. Als sie bald den wahren Sachverhalt erkannte, machte sie große Augen, pfiff vor sich hin, hielt sich aber nicht lange auf, sondern riß die Tür des Schlafzimmers auf und rief mit lauter Stimme in das Dunkel hinein: "Sehen Sie nur mal an, es ist krepiert; da liegt es, ganz und gar krepiert!" (33)

Conclusion

A considerable improvement in Kafka's narrative technique can be seen in "Die Verwandlung" and may be attributed partly to the author's greater objectivity in his treatment of the subject-matter in his second major work. The autobiographical basis of the story is Kafka's conflict between "Beruf" and "Berufung", between his social duty to work and to support himself and his family and his duty to himself to pursue his literary career. Kafka castigates himself in "Die Verwandlung" for having failed to fulfil either of these two duties, but especially the latter. The obsession with personal guilt, or the bad conscience of the hero is again the dominant theme, while the father in the story, though clearly representing Hermann Kafka, plays only a minor rôle. The Freudian theory of the "return of the repressed", which Kafka utilises in both "Das Urteil" and "Der Prozeß", receives classic formulation in "Die Verwandlung".

C H A P T E R IV

"Amerika"

PART I : "Der Heizer".

Among Kafka's novels "Amerika" has received least attention and least critical approval,[1] partly because it does not appear to conform to the normal pattern of his writing and is therefore too difficult; partly because it lacks the psychopathic morbidity of his later works and is therefore too easy. This paradox arises from a refusal in critical circles to admit that "Amerika" is written on more than one level, that there is no single dominant theme and no fundamental development. "Amerika" is a literary hybrid: superimposed upon the neurotic themes so typical of Kafka, there is a veneer of Dickensian realism. Further, the novel is static: Karl Rossmann undergoes no basic psychological change. He does make repeated attempts to progress socially, but is unexpectedly and violently thrust back. The construction of "Amerika" is in fact so piecemeal that the word "novel" is misleading, since it implies development, if only on the most superficial level. Kafka's first real novel is "Der Prozeß", while "Amerika" consists of a series of loosely connected episodes, of themes and variations. The futility of treating it as a homogeneous unit is manifest in the miasma of present criticism. Subdivision is therefore essential, if any coherent interpretation is to result. Thus the first chapter, "Der Heizer", must be isolated from the body of the novel and treated as a separate unit, as the natural link between "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung".

Kafka wrote "Der Heizer" in October 1912. It thus falls chronologically between "Das Urteil", written on the 22nd and 23rd of September, and "Die Verwandlung" which Kafka first read aloud to Oskar Baum

and Max Brod on the 24th of November.(2) Critics can scarcely be blamed for having treated "Amerika" as a Cinderella because it "reads differently" from the other works, but their failure to deduce that the chronological position of "Der Heizer" between "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung", might at least indicate a connection between the three stories, is difficult to understand. Kafka himself supplies the evidence for the existence of this connection in a letter to his publisher, Kurt Wolff:

> "Der Heizer", "die Verwandlung" und das "Urteil" gehören äußerlich und innerlich zusammen, es besteht zwischen ihnen eine offenbare und noch mehr eine geheime Verbindung, auf deren Darstellung durch Zusammenfassung in einem etwa "Die Söhne" betitelten Buch ich nicht verzichten möchte. Mir liegt eben an der Einheit der drei Geschichten nicht weniger als an der Einheit einer von ihnen. (3)

This "offenbare Verbindung" is easily established, for Kafka suggests "Die Söhne" as a title for the Wolff edition. In each of the three stories there is a son; in each the son is callously rejected by his family; in each he accepts that rejection.

A single logical step is required, to show that the "geheime Verbindung" can only be the theme of Kafka's experiences as a writer. That is the "secret connection" between "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung", and it is unlikely that there is a second connection on this level.

The tendency to overemphasise particular aspects of "Amerika" has obscured the meaning of this first chapter. The psychoanalysts see in the character of the stoker the ever-recurrent father-figure: Neider writes: "The stoker is for him [Karl] a father-image, a symbol of the father as

brute-strength, irrationality, and inarticulateness."(4) There is almost no evidence in the text to support this statement; Emrich, on the other hand, seizes upon the words "Eine Bewegung ohne Ende, eine Unruhe, übertragen von dem unruhigen Element auf die hilflosen Menschen und ihre Werke!" and uses them to fit "Amerika", however uncomfortably, into his all-embracing interpretation of Kafka's works. Thus he sees the novel as the most enlightened modern comment upon the gradual process of dehumanisation in the world of mechanised industry.(5) The social implications of "Amerika" will be examined in Chapter IV, Part II. One might, however, make the following very general observation. The impression which one receives upon first reading a book may well be an unreliable basis for judgement, but when repeated readings fail to produce any impression at all of what is said to be the central theme of the work, then it is likely that the critics have been guilty of one-sidedness. "Amerika" does not seem to deal with the process of mass-dehumanisation, with Kafka's personal sexual development,(6) and least of all with Karl Rossmann's entry into the Catholic Church.(7) Emrich claims that the only reliable method of reaching any sound conclusion on a literary work is to make a detailed analysis of the text, and his method is indispensable here. What actually happens in the first chapter of "Amerika"? Karl Rossmann, a young German, is seduced by a servant-girl and sent to America by his parents. On arriving in New York harbour, Karl discovers that he has lost his umbrella. In the course of his search for the umbrella he meets another German, who turns out to be the ship's stoker. After a short conversation, in which the stoker bitterly complains of the ill-treatment which he has received from his immediate superior, Schubal,

Karl accompanies his compatriot to the captain's cabin. In the ensuing trial Karl vehemently defends his new-found friend, but the latter is unable to control his hatred of Schubal and destroys his own case. Karl is now recognised by his Uncle Jakob, who offers him a new and prosperous life in America. Karl and his uncle disembark, but the boy wonders whether this new-found relative will ever be able to replace the stoker.

Here the stoker corresponds to the state of Kafka's writing in 1912, Schubal to the father (Hermann Kafka), and Onkel Jakob to the world of business and social responsibility. The analogy is exact. Karl's sudden devotion to the stoker makes little sense on the narrative level. "Der Heizer scheint dich bezaubert zu haben", says the uncle: "Du hast dich verlassen gefühlt, da hast du den Heizer gefunden und bist ihm jetzt dankbar."(8) Neider explains Karl's "bewitchment" as a "homosexual crush": "Karl's affection for the stoker verges on the sexual. He strokes his fingers, kisses his hand, and altogether seems unnaturally fond of him."(9) Here again Neider's preoccupation with Freudian psychology leads him to lay undue emphasis upon relatively unimportant elements in the narrative when a far more reasonable interpretation suggests itself. Rejected by his parents, Karl seeks a new relationship and finds it in the stoker, just as Kafka had "escaped" to his "new-found" writing in 1912: "'Ich sollte mich vielleicht an diesen Mann halten', ging es Karl durch den Kopf, 'wo finde ich gleich einen besseren Freund.'"(10)

Karl is attracted to the stoker not only as a person, but also in his official capacity as an engineer; but the stoker warns him against this job:

> Sie denken wahrscheinlich nicht ernst daran, Heizer zu werden, aber gerade dann kann man es am leichtesten werden. (11)

Would one normally say this of becoming a stoker? If applied to becoming a writer, these words make better sense. These are only indications. The situation in the captain's cabin will prove more convincing.

If "Amerika" were written on one level only, if it had no deeper, secret meaning, Neider's theory that Karl feels a homosexual attraction to the stoker might be possible. This friendship certainly develops at an uncommon speed, for Kafka writes: "Der Heizer sah nach dieser Antwort zu Karl hinunter, als sei dieser sein Herz, dem er stumm seinen Jammer klage."(12) Yet the words "als sei dieser sein Herz" seem to imply something more intense than a "homosexual crush".(13) Karl and the stoker are one. The sudden enthusiasm which the young exile feels for this man has nothing sexual in it, but is the enthusiasm of discovery, for Karl, like Kafka in 1912, has discovered a part of himself. Mark Spilka sees the stoker in a similar light, although the term "unconscious self" is misleading:

> The novel opens with an image of Karl's relationship to his unconscious self. He plunges down into the bowels of the ship as into the depths of his own being. That the stoker is a part of Karl's being, a part he ought to "join up with" seems fairly clear. (14)

In almost every critical work on "Amerika" the stoker is quickly dismissed as a father-figure. Critics do not even take the trouble to distinguish between the two meanings of the term: a literary representation of an actual father; an idealised picture of the father, or "Wunschbild".

The stoker is neither of these. He is the son, the child who must be protected from the world of Schubals and Hermann Kafkas. Both Kafka and Dickens refer to their works as their "children". In his preface to "David Copperfield", Kafka's model for "Amerika", Dickens writes:

> It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is David Copperfield. (15)

Thus in the stoker-trial Karl acts as defence-counsel for his own child. But the stoker proves an unconvincing witness in his own cause. When he attempts to put his complaint against Schubal into words, he is carried away in a flood of incoherent abuse, just as Kafka, through subjectivity, had lost control of his narrative in "Das Urteil": "Immerhin erfuhr man aus den vielen Reden nichts Eigentliches."(16) How well this can be seen as applying to "Das Urteil". Karl soon becomes aware that this behaviour can only damage the stoker's case. The advice which he gives might serve as Kafka's own comment on his first short story:

> Sie müssen das einfacher erzählen, klarer, der Herr Kapitän kann es nicht würdigen, so wie Sie es ihm erzählen. Ordnen Sie doch Ihre Beschwerden, sagen Sie die wichtigste zuerst und absteigend die anderen. Mir haben Sie es doch immer so klar dargestellt! (17)

But the advice is wasted; Karl is unable to control the stoker and actually fears at one point that he himself will be attacked:

> Wie sollte er auch jetzt plötzlich seine Redeweise ändern, da es ihm doch schien, als hätte er alles, was zu sagen war, ohne die geringste Anerkennung schon vorgebracht. (18)

There are also similarities between the stoker's mental state and that of Georg Bendemann in "Das Urteil". Like Bendemann, the stoker is self-assured and determined before he enters the presence of authority, but then completely loses control of his nerves:

> Er redete sich allerdings in Schweiß, die Papiere auf dem Fenster konnte er längst mit seinen zitternden Händen nicht mehr halten. (19)

In the "Brief an den Vater" Kafka describes his own mental state, when faced by his father:

> Ich bekam vor Dir - Du bist, sobald es um Deine Dinge geht, ein ausgezeichneter Redner - eine stockende, stotternde Art des Sprechens, auch das war Dir noch zu viel, schließlich schwieg ich, zuerst vielleicht aus Trotz, dann, weil ich vor Dir weder reden noch denken konnte. (20)

If the stoker corresponds to Kafka's writing, then it follows that Schubal, the object of his tirade, must stand for Hermann Kafka. We are told little about Schubal in the narrative, but what does appear of his character supports the analogy. In temperament Schubal is the stoker's opposite: calm, confident, self-assured and aggressive. His appearance in the captain's cabin is reminiscent of the newly transformed fathers in "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung":

> Und da war also der Feind, frei und frisch im Festanzug, unter dem Arm ein Geschäftsbuch. (21)

Gregor Samsa's father has a similar appearance:

> Nun aber war er recht gut aufgerichtet, in eine straffe, blaue Uniform mit Goldknöpfen gekleidet, wie sie Diener der Bankinstitute tragen. (22)

Schubal's greatest advantage over the stoker is not, however, his appearance but his ability to speak clearly and convincingly; it is this which brings about the stoker's downfall, not the justice or injustice of his case: "Aber alles mahnte zur Eile, zur Deutlichkeit, zu ganz genauer Darstellung."(23) Schubal, in contrast to the stoker, is a master of eloquence:

> So sprach Schubal. Das war allerdings die klare Rede eines Mannes, und nach der Veränderung in den Mienen der Zuhörer hätte man glauben können, sie hörten zum erstenmal nach langer Zeit wieder menschliche Laute:(24) - Du bist, sobald es um Deine Dinge geht, ein ausgezeichneter Redner.

"Das Urteil" is Kafka's only work to which the words "Mein Schreiben handelte von Dir" may reasonably be applied. Kafka was fully aware that his writing could have no other effect upon his father than to antagonise him further. The volume of stories which appeared under the title "Ein Landarzt" and which Kafka dedicated "Meinem Vater", was pushed aside by his father with the words: "Leg's auf den Nachttisch!"

In spite of attempts to push him aside, the stoker at least gets a hearing, but with no greater success. Conscious of the futility of his

efforts, he abandons all hope of ever proving his case against Schubal and inwardly promises not to plague him any more:

> Schubal würde dann Ruhe haben und nicht mehr in Verzweiflung kommen. (25)

In Kafka's next work, "Die Verwandlung", the father fades into the background; he is no longer the sole object of Kafka's complaint. It is as though Kafka were keeping the stoker's promise. To the stoker Karl says: "Warum sagst du denn nichts? Warum läßt du dir alles gefallen?"(26) Brod might well have asked Kafka the same question, for he writes in his biography: "Darin mag man seine tragische Schuld finden. Er litt und schwieg."(27)

"Der Heizer" forms the introduction to "Amerika". On both the narrative and the secret, inward level the past is summarised and rejected: Amerika replaces Europe; business, in the form of the uncle, replaces writing. We already know that Kafka wrote "Die Verwandlung" only one month after he had completed "Der Heizer". The theme of the later work is the conflict that arises when a man abandons his true interests, to live a life that is socially and materially acceptable:

> Karl faßte den Onkel, mit dessen Knien sich die seinen fast berührten, genauer ins Auge, und es kamen ihm Zweifel, ob dieser Mann ihm jemals den Heizer werde ersetzen können. (28)

"The stoker gives way artistically before the second father-image, Onkel Jakob."(29) Here Neider seems to be on firmer ground. Unlike the stoker, Jakob is a successful business man. He knows his way about the world and is aware of the dangers of sentimentality and dreaming, when

business demands coolness, objectivity and insight into the motives of other people. But is he a "father-image"? In the second chapter of the novel Karl shows such affection for his uncle as Kafka never felt for his father. The uncle is "ein Mann von Prinzipien" but not so by nature; he feels insecure in those principles, and it is for this reason that he sends his nephew away:

> Green erklärte zu Klara, wie der Onkel über Karl wache und wie die Liebe des Onkels zu Karl zu groß sei, als daß man sie noch die Liebe eines Onkels nennen könne. (30)

The temptation is clear: only the love of a parent could be greater than that of an uncle. But if Jakob is a father-figure, it can only be as an idealised version of Hermann Kafka. Even this is not satisfactory. Would an "ideal" parent have expelled his child for such a minor offence? There seems to be no reason to change Kafka's own word, "Onkel". There is much to suggest that the model for this character was Kafka's "Lieblingsonkel", Siegfried Löwy, whom the author later made the subject of the story "Ein Landarzt". In spite of the lack of biographical material on Löwy, the picture is clear enough: Karl Rossmann abandons the stoker to take up employment in his uncle's firm. The choice that he must make between the two men is the same choice that Kafka was forced to make in 1912; and his dilemma is the same dilemma that inspired Kafka to write "Die Verwandlung". In his room in the uncle's house which, like both the "Assicurazioni Generali" and the "Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt",(31) has five floors used for business, Karl wonders whether without his uncle he would

ever have managed to get into America at all:

> Wo hätte er wohl wohnen müssen, wenn er als armer kleiner Einwanderer ans Land gestiegen wäre? Ja, vielleicht hätte man ihn, was der Onkel nach seiner Kenntnis der Einwanderungsgesetze sogar für sehr wahrscheinlich hielt, gar nicht in die Vereinigten Staaten eingelassen. (32)

Here the world of business is represented not only by the uncle, but by the whole United States. It is therefore to his uncle that Karl is indebted for his admission into the business world. Kafka obtained his position with the "Assicurazioni Generali" largely through the intervention of his uncle Siegfried. Löwy was at this time living in Madrid and was a personal friend of the American Vice-Consul. The following note appears on a reference which Kafka received before entering the "Assicurazioni Generali" in 1907:

> Herr Dr. Kafka wurde uns von dem amerikanischen Vicekonsul Herrn Weissberger, dem Vater ihres General-Repräsentanten in Madrid auf das Wärmste empfohlen und entstammt einer angesehenen Familie. (33)

Immigration laws, American Vice-Consuls and uncles with influence fit too well together for the similarity between Onkel Siegfried and Onkel Jakob to be mere coincidence. The two uncles have also certain peculiarities in common. Brod writes of Löwy:

> Kafka bewahrte dem etwas sonderlinghaften Manne, der Zeiteinteilung und Zeitausnützung über alles schätzte, eine mit gutmütigem Spott gemischte Liebe und sehr viel Respekt. (34)

This is exactly Karl's attitude to his uncle: "Liebe und sehr viel Respekt." The quotation also helps to explain Karl's dismissal at the end of chapter three: Karl is sent away not merely because he disobeys, but because he is a threat to his uncle's system of life. His fate is decided on a time basis; he has until midnight to be saved. To uncle Jakob, who symbolically presents Karl with a watch, time is all-important: "dem sonderlinghaften Manne, der Zeiteinteilung und Zeitausnützung über alles schätzte."

Other of Jakob's characteristics seem to be derived from Siegfried's brother, Rudolf Löwy. Both brothers "wanderten aus"; both were "mit dem Vater verfeindet".(35) Jakob himself expresses this enmity: " ... wobei sich leider ein offenes Wort über seine Eltern und ihren Anhang nicht vermeiden lassen wird."(36)

A further, unexplained point is uncle Jakob's change of name. Tauber regards this as a sign of his dishonesty:

> Am Onkel ist verschiedenes zweifelhaft. Er hat seinen Namen geändert, und die Aufdeckung dieses Umstandes durch Karl weckt in der Gesellschaft auf dem Schiff ein zum Teil undurchdringliches Gelächter. (37)

But is there any real reason to blacken Jakob's character? Delarmarche describes the uncle's business as "berüchtigt in den ganzen Vereinigten Staaten", but the word of a jobless and embittered criminal is of little value. It is possible that the uncle's change of name refers to Rudolf Löwy's conversion from Judaism to Catholicism. In his letters, Kafka speaks of Rudolf as "mein getaufter Onkel". By Jewish tradition the

person who changes his religion is regarded as dead; Onkel Jakob, who thinks of himself as a fully-fledged American, is in a sense dead to Europe.

Strictly speaking, "Amerika" does not begin with "Der Heizer" but with the chapter entitled "Onkel Jakob". It is symbolical that the stoker-episode takes place on board ship, before Karl has actually set foot in America and appropriate that in this no-man's-land Karl should take stock of his European past. In his uncle's New York home Karl begins his apprenticeship for business life: Kafka made outstanding progress in the "Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt". Between July 1908 and March 1913, he was promoted four times: from "Aushilfsbeamter" to Vizesekretär". He was not merely tolerated in this firm but treated with the highest respect and allowed a degree of freedom that must be rare in business life. Kafka's official hours were from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m., but it is clear from Janouch's "Gespräche mit Kafka" and from Kafka's own diaries and letters that much of this time was spent in writing, talking or daydreaming. This was made possible by the protection of Dr. Otto Pribram, president of the "Anstalt" and father of Kafka's school and university colleague, Edward Felix Pribram. Kafka was thus spared much of the "upward grind" to which apprentices are normally subjected. Before entering the "Anstalt", he had, however, voluntarily attended lectures on "Arbeiter-Versicherung" at the "Prager Handelsakademie" and had passed the final examinations with distinction. His evenings were spent in further study and in learning Italian, for Kafka had hopes that his first position in the "Assicurazioni Generali" would enable him to go abroad: "auf den Sesseln sehr entfernter Länder zu sitzen."(38)

Karl Rossmann's apprenticeship follows a pattern very similar to Franz Kafka's. Through his uncle's protection he is spared the bitter experience of starting at the bottom:

> Der Onkel kam ihm aber auch in jeder Kleinigkeit freundlich entgegen, und niemals mußte Karl sich erst durch schlechte Erfahrungen belehren lassen, wie dies meist das erste Leben im Ausland verbittert. (39)

Karl, like Kafka, is a daydreamer; he spends long periods standing on the balcony, gazing down at the traffic. For this he is rebuked only by a frown from his uncle, whose daily visits at the most diverse hours are reminiscent of the visits of higher officials, who hope to surprise idle employees by appearing unexpectedly. Karl must also set about learning the business. In his case this is synonymous with learning English, just as Italian was for Kafka the prerequisite to employment in the "Assicurazioni Generali". Karl takes lessons and meets with nothing but success. His patron is delighted with Karl's progress and, with considerable pride in his new-found protégé, introduces him to his business associates:

> Je besser Karls Englisch wurde, desto größere Lust zeigte der Onkel, ihn mit seinen Bekannten zusammenzuführen. (40)

Although much of this information encroaches unavoidably upon the second chapter of "Amerika", its main purpose is to support the thesis that in "Der Heizer" the stoker and the uncle represent the same conflicting demands of writing and business that Kafka was to treat in "Die Verwandlung". In "Der Heizer" it is not, however, a question of <u>abandoning</u> writing but of substituting a more controlled and objective technique for the subjectivity

of "Das Urteil". The outcome certainly seems happier in "Der Heizer" than in "Die Verwandlung", as it must have seemed to Kafka when he first found the "ersehnten Posten"(41) in the "Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt". But Kafka was to suffer agonies in his employment; Karl Rossmann does not escape similar suffering. In "Der Heizer" Karl is only an observer, but he must himself undergo two trials in which, like the stoker, he will be condemned without a hearing.

There are certain quotations from Kafka's autobiographical works which every critic knows by heart and uses as a starting-point for his interpretation. Among these "key-quotations" there is the following on "Der Heizer":

> Dickens "Copperfield" ("Der Heizer" glatte Dickensnachahmung, noch mehr der geplante Roman). Koffergeschichte, der Beglückende und Bezaubernde, die niedrigen Arbeiten, die Geliebte auf dem Landgut, die schmutzigen Häuser u.a., vor allem aber die Methode. Meine Absicht war, wie ich jetzt sehe, einen Dickens-Roman zu schreiben, nur bereichert um die schärferen Lichter, die ich der Zeit entnommen, und die mattern, die ich aus mir selbst aufgesteckt hätte. (42)

This is indeed a "key-quotation", an accurate description of the author's source and intention, with none of the ambiguity or misleading oversimplification of "Mein Schreiben handelte von Dir" or of "Schreiben als Form des Gebetes".(43) And yet "Amerika" remains shrouded in mystery.

This is clearly a "key" which needs careful examination. "Glatte Dickensnachahmung", writes Kafka: "Meine Absicht war, wie ich jetzt sehe, einen Dickens-Roman zu schreiben." There is a danger here of not reading further. If "Amerika" is "glatte Dickensnachahmung" then the biographer's job is finished. The real originator of this novel is not Kafka but Dickens; it is second-hand and false. Thus Mark Spilka can write:

> But along with the surface-pattern of social disruption, Kafka seems to borrow a much more psychological pattern from Dickens and to intensify it to suit his own needs. I refer to the proliferation of parental authorities and external traps which characterises both "David Copperfield" and "Amerika". (44)

Spilka may well be an expert on Dickens, but his knowledge of Kafka leaves much to be desired. Is he not aware that the whole of Kafka's work is permeated with "parental authorities and external traps"? Are we to believe that Kafka "borrowed" them all from Dickens? It is true that there are situations in "Amerika" which resemble some in "David Copperfield". But these are superficial; they form the "veneer of Dickensian realism" that has caused so much confusion in Kafka-criticism. To accuse Kafka of having "borrowed" from Dickens situations and themes which recur throughout his work, is not only unintelligent but insulting. If Kafka borrowed the themes of parental authority and external traps from Dickens, then "Der Prozeß" and "Das Schloß" are among the finest examples of plagiarism in modern literature. The examples of "Dickensnachahmung" which Kafka cites are all on the narrative level: "Koffergeschichte, der Beglückende und Bezaubernde, die niedrigen Arbeiten, die Geliebte auf dem

Landgut, die schmutzigen Häuser u.a." His next sentence is far more important:

> Meine Absicht war, wie ich jetzt sehe, einen Dickens-Roman zu schreiben, nur bereichert um die schärferen Lichter, die ich der Zeit entnommen, und die mattern, die ich aus mir selbst aufgesteckt hätte. (45)

There is an implication of failure in these words. Looking back after four years, Kafka seems to realise that the novel has not turned out as he intended. His purpose in imitating Dickens had been to escape from the themes and problems which haunted him in 1912, and which had expressed themselves so disastrously in "Das Urteil". If alone he had not the strength to change his style of writing, then he would look for guidance to an author whom he admired and who seemed to have overcome subjectivity. America is the traditional land of escape. Kafka's "Amerika" was to be his novel of escape. As such it was a complete failure: "Wie sollte er auch jetzt plötzlich seine Redeweise ändern?"(46) Charles Neider writes:

> Nevertheless the escape occurred only on the most superficial levels in terms of environment and plot. Underneath these, in a web of cabbalistic symbols, the real world intruded and in the last analysis dominated the brilliant upper world, distorting its face. (47)

It is important to remember here that Kafka's next work was not "Onkel Jakob" but "Die Verwandlung". In the beetle-story Kafka's intention to abandon the old themes is to some extent fulfilled. "Die Verwandlung" is a far more objective work than "Das Urteil"; the father

appears only as a member of the Samsa family. By the time he came to write the second chapter of "Amerika" Kafka had again yielded to the subjectivity of his earliest works. The only basic difference between "Amerika" and "Das Urteil" is the Dickensian method. The irrationality of the father and of authority in general, the sense of guilt which plagues even the innocent, the ambivalent position of the mother in the family, the struggle for social integration - all these occur in "Amerika". It is doubtful whether, without its "Dickensian veneer", the novel would have been any more convincing or readable than "Das Urteil".

Conclusion

"Der Heizer" is the natural and chronological link between "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung". In the figure of the stoker, Kafka has symbolised the state of his writing in 1912, and his treatment of the father-son conflict in particular. He thus expresses his dissatisfaction with "Das Urteil" and his determination to abandon unduly subjective themes and to evolve a more controlled narrative style. His apparent success in this has been demonstrated in Chapter III.

PART II : The Remaining Chapters.

We have now seen that "Der Heizer" stands outside the main body of Kafka's work. It is, in fact, almost secondary literature, a critical review by the author himself, comprising not only remarks on past work but suggestions for future literary activity. Kafka is determined to abandon the old subjective themes, to write a "normal" novel on Dickensian lines and to choose a traditional theme which can be treated with at least some degree of objectivity. To find such a theme was not unduly difficult: he merely required to shift the emphasis in his previous work. The major theme of the guilt or bad conscience of the hero was to be displaced, and the secondary theme, "die geheime Verbindung", raised from a purely personal to a social level. In writing a novel about the artist in society Kafka could draw upon personal experience without undue subjectivism, allow his hero to undergo a series of Dickensian adventures and feel the satisfaction of following in the footsteps of one of his favourite authors, Thomas Mann. It was a bold plan, but Kafka had every reason to expect success. If he could control a highly personal theme in "Die Verwandlung", what difficulty would he have with such a traditional theme as that of the artist in society?

Students of modern German literature cannot fail to regard this as the special field of Thomas Mann, perhaps even to suspect that in his voluminous writings the subject must have been exhausted, and it is strange that Kafka should have admired an author whose manner of writing was so completely alien to his own. Perhaps Mann's stamina, his ability to work like a civil servant and yet remain an artist, was what attracted Kafka. In

comparing the two authors, Neider writes:

> Whereas Mann assumed the appurtenances of burgherdom in his personal life, while toying with the illicit in his work, Kafka's hypochondriacal asceticism and scrupulosity prevented him from playing the good burgher with any lasting success. (1)

Certainly, the older author seems to have overcome the artist-bourgeois problem within his own life, to have developed that objectivity which Tonio Kröger considers essential for the successful artist:

> Liegt Ihnen zu viel an dem, was Sie zu sagen haben, schlägt Ihr Herz zu warm dafür, so können Sie eines vollständigen Fiaskos sicher sein. (2)

In 1918 Mann described his own position as follows:

> Ich gehöre geistig jenem über ganz Europa verbreiteten Geschlecht von Schriftstellern an, die, aus der décadence kommend, zu Chronisten und Analytikern der décadence bestellt, gleichzeitig den emanzipatorischen Willen zur Absage an sie im Herzen tragen. (3)

Thus Mann describes disease but advocates moral health. Kafka, unlike Hans Castorp, was compelled to live with sickness and alienation to the very end. His heroes do not return to the field of battle, but die as ignominiously and ungraciously as Thomas Buddenbrooks. In Mann it is possible to trace a progression culminating in the rejection of disease and of the desire for death. Thus, Roy Pascal writes:

> In his first novel Mann was concerned only to portray the late culture of the German burgher class, where refinement of the spirit goes hand in hand with decadence, an unconscious longing for death. By the time he wrote "The Magic Mountain", however, he established too the possibility of overcoming this death-wish. (4)

Kafka's development is far less fundamental; for him there is no way out, no solution, no reconciliation. Brod's attempts to show that through the atmosphere of darkness and disease there shines a ray of hope, are bound to fail. Kafka's writing is utterly pessimistic. Where he expresses hope, he is either dreaming or imitating others. The apparently utopian "Naturtheater von Oklahoma" is the least convincing chapter in "Amerika", a deliberate reversal of the previous pattern of events. Yet critics have called this the most hopeful section in Kafka's work. It is, in fact, the most desolate. Genuine hope is not something used to cover up despair, a burying of one's head in the sand, but exists in spite of despair, in the full recognition of the apparent hopelessness of the situation. When Kafka is no longer able to bear the sight of the world, he turns his eyes away. That is not hope but deliberate evasion, the final defeat.

Unlike Mann, however, Kafka rarely refers to his heroes as artists. One exception is the "Naturtheater von Oklahoma" which offers each applicant the opportunity of being an artist. Here the fundamental problem of the artist, the problem of social integration, is universalised, so that the opportunity of becoming an artist may be taken to mean the opportunity for every individual to find his place in society. It is clear that the

vastness of the "Theater" makes it impossible for the reader to accept it at its face value. Like the uncle's communications firm and the Hotel Occidental, it represents society as a whole. However, not every critic has taken this view: "Kann uns jemand ein Theater nennen, das fähig ist, ein solches, also weltumspannendes Angebot zu machen?" asks Alfred Borchardt, "Wer außer der Kirche?"(5) Borchardt's view of "Amerika" is more than a little one-sided, and unduly coloured by his personal religious beliefs. As a result, his logic suffers. "Wir sind das Theater, das jeden brauchen kann, jeden an seinem Ort", says the advertisement. While it is true that the Church can and does accept each believer who craves admission, only society can use everyone. This may seem an unfairly literal criticism of Borchardt's argument, for it reduces the whole question to one of employment, but employment is, in fact, exactly what the Theatre offers. What is more important is that it guarantees the applicant suitable employment, a place for everyone and this is just what Karl has been seeking. The "Naturtheater" may bring Kafka's American novel to an unlikely conclusion, but at least it has some relevancy to the previous chapters. Borchardt makes Rossmann's journey a pilgrimage, with the "Naturtheater" as its goal. If this is so, it follows that "Amerika" is the most obscure religious allegory ever written, that "David Copperfield" is also a religious allegory, since Kafka describes "Amerika" as a sheer imitation of it, and that Kafka experienced a sudden upsurgence of faith in the Roman Catholic Church, although he was a Jew and at this time held beliefs which were purely atheistic. If the image of the world as a vast theatre were not so common, if Shakespeare had never written "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players", Borchardt might be excused this piece of religious dogmatism. As

it is, his views are unacceptable. "Das Naturtheater von Oklahoma" is Kafka's image for a utopian society in which artist and burgher can live together amicably and in mutual respect.

Here then Kafka uses the word "artist", but not in a literal sense. Such is his technique: he rarely gives things their proper names. Thus, although his societies are often Jewish in character, the word "Jude" does not appear anywhere in his writing. Günther Anders is probably right when he says that Kafka's purpose was: "die mit den Namen automatisch verbundenen Vorurteile von vornherein abzuschneiden."(6) A less benevolent critic might, however, suggest that Kafka was primarily concerned to obscure the autobiographical element in his works, even that he cultivated this obscurity. Mann's theme, artist and bourgeois, is clearly defined, so that, in the main, there is little critical dissension on the meaning of his work. Nor is this a criticism of Mann; there is no merit in obscurity, and Kafka is obscure.

Mann himself recognised, however, that there were similarities between Kafka's theme and his own. In an essay on Kafka, "Dem Dichter zu Ehren", he gives the following interpretation of Kafka's work:

> Man kann sagen, daß das "strebende Bemühen", das eine Dichtung wie "Das Schloß" zum Ausdruck bringt, das tragikomische Pathos, das ihr zugrunde liegt, eine Transponierung und Erhöhung der künstlerischen Einsamkeitsschmerzen Tonio Krögers um das schlichte, menschliche Gefühl seines schlechten bürgerlichen Gewissens und seiner Liebe zu dem "Blonden und Gewöhnlichen" ins Religiöse ist. (7)

But it is not enough simply to state that Kafka depicts the problem

of the artist in society, for this assumes that the nature of that problem is common knowledge. In Mann the artist is cut off from the world by over-sensitivity, by a heightened insight or intuition that prevents him from accepting life and plunges him into a state of constant analysis of himself and of the world around him:

> - der Fall Hamlets, des Dänen, dieses typischen Literaten. Er wußte, was das ist: zum Wissen berufen werden, ohne dazu geboren zu sein. Hellsehen noch durch den Tränenschleier des Gefühls hindurch, erkennen, merken, beobachten und das Beobachtete lächelnd beiseite legen müssen noch in Augenblicken, wo Hände sich umschlingen, Lippen sich finden, wo des Menschen Blick, erblindet von Empfindung, sich bricht. (8)

Here it is the artist who is unable to adjust himself. The world does not reject him; he rejects the world, both morally and aesthetically:

> Sie fangen an, sich gezeichnet, sich in einem rätselhaften Gegensatz zu den anderen, den Gewöhnlichen, den Ordentlichen zu fühlen, der Abgrund von Ironie, Unglaube, Opposition, Erkenntnis, Gefühl, der Sie von den Menschen trennt, klafft tiefer und tiefer, Sie sind einsam, und fortan gibt es keine Verständigung mehr. (9)

This is also true of Kafka. It is expressed in his ambivalent attitude to society, in the wish to be normal, to be one of the "nice regular people", and the inability to be so, the "hopeless rapprochement". There is perhaps something false in Tonio Kröger's admiration of "das Leben in seiner verführerischen Banalität", as there is in Kafka's praise of bourgeois normality and the uncomplicated happiness of quiet family life. "Those nice

regular people" is a weak compliment indeed, designed to conceal the real emotion behind the words, "You realise that you are alone, and from then on any rapprochement is simply hopeless." The meaning is clear; the artist-martyr, misunderstood and alone, searches hopelessly for a single receptive ear - the aesthete in a world of philistines. But does he really want to join the philistines or is he in love with his loneliness, the proof of his superiority, the sign upon his brow? And yet few critics have shown any sympathy for Hermann Kafka, or would be prepared to defend him against the attacks of his "oversensitive" son. Here normal values are reversed: sickness is seen as a kind of inner health, health as something contemptible. And Kafka himself shared this view. To Gustav Janouch he said:

> Edschmid behauptet, daß ich Wunder in gewöhnliche Vorgänge hineinpraktiziere. Das ist natürlich ein schwerer Irrtum von seiner Seite. Das Gewöhnliche selbst ist ja schon ein Wunder. Ich zeichne es nur auf. (10)

Kafka's societies are, however, less miraculous than diseased. He would claim that he had "recorded" that disease too, thereby objectively depicting the world. So we are led to believe that there is nothing fantastic in Kafka's writing at all, but that we, his readers, are merely too blind to see the sickness and corruption around us. It is upon this hypothesis that the whole school of critics, who see in Kafka the modern prophet, pointing to reality and crying "Repent!", have based their views. "Die höchste Realität" is not to be found in the sickness and corruption of Kafka's world, nor in the uncomplicated triumph of virtue in the fairy-tale. If one can speak of comparative realities at all, then the "highest reality" must surely imply the totality of human experience and not merely one side

of it. "Is it wise to admire Kafka's work?" asks the editor of the English edition of "Kafka - Pro und Contra". The reply must be: "Only if disease is admirable."

Kafka's theme, then, is similar to Mann's but far more pessimistic. The artist is not only psychologically incapable of integrating himself socially, he is prevented from doing so. Mann's bourgeois societies are, at worst, apathetic; Kafka's is positively antagonistic, for Karl Rossmann is repeatedly condemned without a hearing. Thus Kafka carries the psychological and perhaps self-imposed alienation of Tonio Kröger to its physical conclusion. The difference between the social attitudes described by Mann and by Kafka, between apathy and aggression, is best explained by the biographical factors which determined Kafka's conception of the relationship between burgher and artist. The "secret connection" between "Das Urteil", "Die Verwandlung" and "Der Heizer" has already been established: in each story one character represents Kafka the writer. This is not the sole connection. In both "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung", the father appears as the executioner who must carry out the judgement of conscience. Similarly, in "Der Heizer", it is Schubal, the father-figure, who is responsible for the stoker's downfall. In these three stories a pattern of struggle between father and son, between burgher and artist, is firmly established. It is repeated in "Amerika" with the emphasis on trial. There are four trial scenes in the novel. In each there appear: a father-figure, representative of the antagonistic bourgeoisie; the defendant himself whose crime is always nonconformity; and parties who are sympathetic but ineffectual. The pattern of Kafka's home life is here clearly recognisable.

In the "Brief an den Vater" Kafka writes:

> Richtiger trafst Du mit Deiner Abneigung mein Schreiben und was, Dir unbekannt, damit zusammenhing. Hier war ich tatsächlich ein Stück selbständig von Dir weggekommen, wenn es auch ein wenig an den Wurm erinnerte, der, hinten von einem Fuß niedergetreten, sich mit dem Vorderteil losreißt und zur Seite schleppt. Die Abneigung, die Du natürlich auch gleich gegen mein Schreiben hattest, war mir hier ausnahmsweise willkommen . . . . , weil jene Formel mir klang wie etwa: "Jetzt bist Du frei!" Natürlich war es eine Täuschung, ich war nicht oder allergünstigen Falles noch nicht frei. (11)

Three important points arise here: firstly, Kafka uses the word "Abneigung" and not "apathy" or "indifference". Secondly, his worm-image is one of incomplete escape. Thirdly, he speaks of this dislike as implying a sort of freedom, which, however, turns out to be a delusion. The antagonism with which American society greets Karl Rossmann is clearly a product of dislike. His "escape" to America is incomplete because he is constantly trampled by surrogate fathers. The impression of freedom, which he receives upon entering New York harbour, is soon revealed as a delusion by his experiences in the New World. The analogy is exact. For Rossmann, expulsion from his home is a prerequisite to freedom and independence. He is granted that freedom through his father's middle-class fear of the scandal which would result from his son's "unhealthy" activities. His freedom proves spurious, however, for he is pursued and oppressed in America by his father's "representatives". He is not yet free.

A more clearly Freudian interpretation of Kafka's first novel is provided by Charles Neider, who writes:

> Karl's problem is sexual. He strives to obtain heterosexual stability. This was the problem of his creator in 1912. (12)

This is an ill-considered statement. "Karl's problem is sexual." It is not. His problem is directed towards one point only: the security which he hopes to find in friendship and employment. Rossmann is an adolescent and in his dealings with women, and with Clara Pollunder in particular, betrays only the awakenings of sexual interest. "He strives to attain heterosexual stability." He does not. Karl rarely thinks of sex at all, far from striving to attain it in any form. "This was the problem of his creator in 1912." It was not. Kafka's problem in 1912 concerned the conflicting demands of marriage and literature.

Unfortunately, it is upon these three false premises that Neider constructs his interpretation of "Amerika". He divides the course of Karl's career into the three familiar Freudian stages: narcissistic, homosexual and heterosexual. The novel is, therefore, the story of Karl's progress towards "heterosexual stability". This is unacceptable because, like the theories of Emrich, Spilka and Borchardt, it turns something of secondary importance into the central theme. Rossmann <u>cannot</u> progress towards "heterosexual stability". Indeed, he cannot progress towards anything, for Kafka's first novel is devoid of development on any level. "Amerika" should be regarded as a pattern, containing a recurrent motif. The motif is trial; while the colours in the pattern vary, the essential shapes are the same throughout.

Firstly, the defendant is always innocent. Karl Rossmann is

expelled from Europe because a servant-girl seduces him, from his uncle's house because he accepts an invitation, and from the Hotel Occidental because he temporarily abandons his lift. In each case he is "seduced", tempted away from the course of unfailing virtue which he is determined to pursue. In each "seduction" he is completely passive.

The theme of innocence in a guilty world is vital for an understanding of "Amerika". Kafka takes great pains to hold the reader's sympathy for his hero, eventually defeating his own purpose by making him unbearably virtuous. In his diaries he writes:

> Rossmann und K., der Schuldlose und der Schuldige. (13)

The comparison is not perhaps so apt as critics have made it. Karl is not "innocent" as opposed to "guilty", but "innocent" as opposed to "worldly-wise"; he is naïve. Roy Pascal writes:

> The boy Karl Rossmann claims our direct sympathy on simple moral grounds, because of his youth, goodness, guilelessness and loyalty. (14)

That is true. But what is the reaction of American society to these virtues? Aggression! Rossmann is too perfect, an intolerable nuisance which must be removed, if the wheels of deceit and corruption are to go on turning smoothly. His "crimes", failures and inadequacies are all the result of his naïveté, moral uprightness and refusal to lie. In an evil and sophisticated world, goodness is not only a poor recommendation; it is intolerable. Emrich writes:

> Aber seine Güte, seine "Schuldlosigkeit", verhindert seine Aufnahme. Sein Kampf um das "Recht" des Menschen, um wahre Gerechtigkeit, macht ihn unbrauchbar für diese Welt trotz unermüdlicher Arbeit und redlichen Fleißes. Denn all sein gutes, selbstloses Handeln verkehrt sich in den Augen der Umwelt ins Böse, da dieser Umwelt ein gutes Handeln schlechterdings unfaßlich, undenkbar oder töricht erscheint. (15)

Yet, in spite of this "moral uprightness", Karl is found guilty in each trial and, technically, he is guilty. He is the father of the servant-girl's illegitimate child; he is the ungrateful nephew who disobeys his uncle and protector; he is the lift-boy who abandons his post. This paradox of moral innocence combined with technical guilt (a recurrent theme in the works of Goethe and Hebbel) has been explained in terms of original sin. The explanation corresponds to Borchardt's conception of Karl's American journey as a pilgrimage. Reasons for rejecting this religious interpretation of "Amerika" have already been given in this chapter. But if the word "innocent" is strictly adhered to, there can be hardly any other explanation. The unquestioned acceptance of Kafka's own word has proved a stumbling-block, of which previous critics have on the whole been unaware. It is not a state of original sinfulness that allows Rossmann to be seduced from the path of virtue, for at least two of his "crimes" result from feelings of human kindness, from his desire to make friends with Pollunder and his daughter, Clara, and from his attempts to help the incapable Robinson. These actions must not be described as sins but as mistakes, mistakes which are not the product of innocence but of naïveté. The problem, dealt with in "Amerika", is therefore not moral but social. It is

the problem of artlessness in a sophisticated society, a society in which ignorance rather than sin produces crime. This is essentially the meaning of Kafka's words to Gustav Janouch:

> Die meisten Menschen sind gar nicht böse. Die Menschen werden schlecht und schuldig dadurch, daß sie sprechen und handeln, ohne die Wirkung ihrer eigenen Worte und Taten sich vorzustellen. (16)

This artlessness, then, this lack of sophistication is what defeats Karl's attempts to find his place in society. Physically he is an adolescent, but mentally he is still a child. It is this child-like perspective which Mark Spilka regards as the common factor in "Amerika" and "David Copperfield":

> It was the child's view of the world which Kafka shared with Dickens. (17)

Spilka's explanation of this phenomenon is biographical. Both Kafka and Dickens, he says, failed in their relationships within the family and consequently wrote from an "arrested sensibility". What Spilka ignores, however, is that it is not only the child's view of the universe that Kafka depicts, but the artist's view. The concept of the artist as a child is not new. In 1900 Rilke writes of Jacobsen:

> Jacobsen hat keine Erfahrung gehabt, keine Liebe . . . nur eine Kindheit. Eine große, ungeheuer farbige Kindheit, in der er alles fand, was seine Seele brauchte, um sich phantastisch zu verkleiden. (18)

And two years later he expressly states:

> Kunst ist Kindheit nämlich. (19)

Here, however, the traditional description of the artist-bourgeois problem ends. In Part I of this chapter we suggested that Kafka had determined to write a "normal" novel on Dickensian lines, but that the old subjective themes (the father, Kafka's sense of guilt, etc.) had intruded, distorting the face of the work. "Amerika" thus anticipates Kafka's second novel in that the hero, who has incurred no objective personal guilt, is put on trial and condemned without a hearing.

In the first trial, which is previous to the beginning of the novel, and which results in Karl's expulsion from Europe, the father uses the son's ignorance of convention to destroy his chance of social integration. Karl, who is a student and has hopes of becoming an engineer, allows himself to be seduced and has obviously no idea of the inevitable consequences. He is bewildered by what happens but makes no serious attempt to prevent it:

> Einmal aber sagte sie "Karl" und führte ihn, der noch über die unerwartete Ansprache staunte, unter Grimassen seufzend in ihr Zimmerchen, das sie zusperrte. Würgend umarmte sie seinen Hals, und während sie ihn bat, sie zu entkleiden, entkleidete sie in Wirklichkeit ihn und legte ihn in ihr Bett. (20)

Karl's crime is simply that he allows this to take place, that he is ignorant of what is happening and of a social code which concerns itself with technical guilt rather than moral rectitude, with discipline rather than justice. "Ignorantia legis neminem excusat". This is the principle which

society, in the form of the father, evokes to justify its harsh treatment of the artist, when its real motivation is dislike.

The similarity between this first trial and what takes place in the country house is striking. The seduction in this case is by the uncle's friend, Pollunder, who makes use not only of Karl's natural credulity but also of his sexual interest in his daughter, to lure him away from the security of his new-found home. Karl's opinion of Pollunder is phrased in the most naïve terms:

> Herr Pollunder, dieser freundliche Mensch, kam zu Hilfe. (21)

and: "O ja", sagte Herr Pollunder gedehnt und bewies damit, daß er nicht lügen konnte. (22)

Karl again makes no attempt to resist his seducer, and for the same reasons: he has no idea that what he is doing is wrong, and no conception of the consequences. It is this that makes the verdict in each trial seem so grotesquely unjust: the defendant is only made aware of the law after he has infringed it. In the country house Green, the messenger of society, is already waiting to deliver the verdict. There is no need to dwell on Green's similarity to Hermann Kafka. He is a vulgarian, a gigantic figure whose colossal appetite and appalling table-manners almost drive Karl away in a state of nausea. This whole scene, and particularly Green's admonitions to Karl to eat more and faster, is reminiscent of passages from Kafka's "Brief an den Vater":

> Weil Du entsprechend Deinem kräftigen Hunger und Deiner besonderen Vorliebe alles schnell, heiß und in großen Bissen gegessen hast, mußte sich das Kind beeilen, düstere Stille war

> bei Tisch, unterbrochen von Ermahnungen: "zuerst iß, dann sprich" oder "schneller, schneller, schneller" oder "siehst Du, ich habe schon längst aufgegessen." (23)

But, however distasteful, Green is the judge appointed by society. Yet he lacks the essential quality of a judge, impartiality. He dislikes Karl and uses the boy's unwitting disobedience as a pretext to rob him of his security. There can be no other explanation of his behaviour. For once, Karl realises that he has been deliberately tricked. He says to Green:

> Besagt nicht die Überschrift ganz deutlich, daß die Mitternacht für mich noch der letzte Termin sein soll? Und Sie sind es, der die Schuld trägt, daß ich ihn versäumt habe. (24)

In the third trial, which takes place in the Hotel Occidental, Kafka emphasises not only the antagonism of the father towards the son, but also the ambivalent position of the mother in the battle between them. Karl on this occasion allows himself to be seduced by the lecherous and drunken Robinson. ("Robinson sah Karl lockend an"). Ironically, he abandons his lift in an attempt to obey the very laws which condemn him, for he is aware that a lift-boy - "der niedrigste und entbehrlichste Angestellte in der ungeheueren Stufenleiter der Dienerschaft dieses Hotels" - cannot possibly allow his friends to defile the hotel and even drive away the guests. It is with this in mind that Karl deserts his post and takes the vomiting Robinson to the lift-boys' dormitory. The ensuing trial is perhaps the most depressing in "Amerika". Not only is the verdict predetermined, but the judge, in this case the Head Waiter, makes no attempt to conceal the fact:

> Du hast deinen Posten ohne Erlaubnis verlassen. Weißt du, was das bedeutet? Das bedeutet Entlassung. Ich will keine Entschuldigungen hören, deine erlogenen Ausreden kannst du für dich behalten, mir genügt vollständig die Tatsache, daß du nicht da warst. (25)

In reply Karl admits his crime, but pleads ignorance; it is a plea not for justice, but for that tolerant understanding which grows only from experience:

> "Ich habe nicht gewußt, daß man telephonisch um Erlaubnis bitten muß", sagte Karl. "Gerade eine solche Bestimmung, die man niemals braucht, vergißt man." (26)

However, the hotel is run not on tolerance but on discipline. If there is any question of judgement at all, it is behaviour which is judged, not motivation. Karl cannot hope for justice from the Head Waiter; he is not judged, but prejudged and, like the stoker, abandons his case in despair:

> "Es ist unmöglich, sich zu verteidigen, wenn nicht guter Wille da ist", sagte sich Karl und antwortete dem Oberkellner nicht mehr. (27)

The pattern of Kafka's American novel may be summarised as follows: Karl Rossmann, the hero, makes repeated attempts to find a place for himself in an alien society. He differs from the members of that society in that he is naïve, while they are sophisticated. He himself is completely unaware

of this difference and consequently makes mistakes, which put him at their mercy. Society, on the other hand, is fully aware of the difference. Indeed, it is from this very awareness that their antagonism springs, for what is different is a threat. Kafka's conception of an antagonistic bourgeoisie is largely the product of his relationship with his father. The home situation is further portrayed in the presence of sympathetic but ineffectual characters (Karl's mother, the captain, the uncle, the manageress), who withdraw their support from him in the face of pressure from the father-figures (Karl's father, Schubal, Mr. Green, the Head Waiter).

One final point must be made: it is that while there is undoubtedly an element of bureaucratic satire in "Amerika", as there is in "Der Prozeß" and "Das Schloß", it would be misleading to suggest that any of these works could be interpreted primarily in terms of social criticism. While it is true, as Roy Pascal states, that Karl Rossmann suffers at the hands of an essentially capitalistic society, no final decision is possible as to where Kafka's political sympathies actually lay. At most one can say that Kafka, who was undoubtedly aware of the evils of bureaucracy and was sympathetic towards the insurance claimants who came to the "Anstalt", drew upon his knowledge of this "atrophied bureaucracy" in creating the symbols for his major works. If Kafka was a socialist, and there is evidence to suggest that he was, his socialism was certainly not militant. Indeed, it seems probable that his political sympathies were divided, that his attitude to capitalism was characterised by ambivalence; and this ambivalence may ultimately have been nothing more than a symptom of political indifference:

Ich verstehe nichts von politischen Dingen. Das ist natürlich ein Mangel, den ich gerne beseitigen möchte. Ich habe aber so viele Fehler! Die allernächsten Dinge fliehen vor mir immer mehr und mehr in die Ferne. Ich bewundere Max Brod, der sich selbst im Gestrüpp der Politik auskennt. Er erzählt mir oft sehr viel und lange über das Tagesgeschehen. Ich höre ihm zu, so wie ich jetzt Ihnen zuhörte, und doch - kann ich in die Sache nicht ganz eindringen. (28)

Conclusion

Kafka set out in "Amerika" to write a realist novel on Dickensian lines, and chose as his theme the position of the artist in society. The novel has precedents in the works of Rilke and Thomas Mann, in so far as the artist is portrayed as child-like and naïve and there is a basic incompatability between him and the society which he strives to enter. Here the traditional statement of the artist-bourgeois problem ends.

Kafka failed to carry out his original intention to write a "normal" novel, because he was unable to conceal his obsessive preoccupation with the theme of personal guilt. His hero is persecuted and driven from place to place by surrogate fathers who condemn him for "crimes" of which he is morally innocent but technically guilty. "Amerika" is thus a literary hybrid: superimposed upon the neurotic themes, so typical of Kafka, there is a veneer of Dickensian realism.

Since the themes of trial and of social rejection are dominant in "Amerika", the novel anticipates both "Der Prozeß" and "Das Schloß".

C H A P T E R V

"Der Prozeß".

Kafka's second novel is tedious and obscure. Like the Emperor's new clothes, its appeal for critics has lain in the very invisibility of its meaning, for which few theories could be convincingly defended, none could be conclusively attacked.

In the ninth chapter of the novel ("Im Dom") there appears the legend "Vor dem Gesetz".(1) This legend, which is intended to enlighten Josef K. either as to the meaning of his trial or as to the correct way of managing his defence, tells of a man from the country who comes to beg for admittance to the Law. At the entrance to the Law he is confronted by a door-keeper, who tells the man that he cannot admit him at that moment. The man spends the rest of his life seated before the door, vainly hoping for permission to enter. Just before he dies, he puts to the door-keeper one final question:

> Alle streben doch nach dem Gesetz; wie kommt es, daß in den vielen Jahren niemand außer mir Einlaß verlangt hat? (2)

To this he receives the reply:

> Hier konnte niemand sonst Einlaß erhalten, denn dieser Eingang war nur für dich bestimmt. Ich gehe jetzt und schließe ihn. (2)

These words are immediately followed by a lengthy discussion between Josef K. and the priest ("Exegese der Legende"), in which all the possible nuances of meaning within the legend are examined. Yet no final conclusion is ever reached. Josef K. ends the discussion with the words: "Die Lüge wird zur Weltordnung gemacht", but Kafka comments: "Aber sein Endurteil war es nicht." If this legend is, as many critics have claimed, a summary of Josef K.'s position and therefore of the novel itself, the

exegesis may be compared to the ever-increasing mass of interpretation which has not shed any new light on the novel. On the contrary, like the candle in the cathedral, "es vermehrte vielmehr die Finsternis."(3) The exegesis might well serve as a warning to the critic, for as Charles Neider points out, Josef K. is incapable of asking elementary questions such as: "What are you doing in the cathedral? What have you, a priest, to do with the Court? What would you do if I walked out now, refusing to listen to you?"(4) Instead of asking such questions, he allows himself to become entangled in a web of interminable and fruitless speculation. In order to avoid making a similar mistake, the critic must ask two "elementary questions": Can the novel be compared in form or content to any other work by Kafka? Is there any situation in the author's own life, upon which he might have based "Der Prozeß"? A summary of the works already discussed in this thesis will be of assistance in answering the first question:

All four works, "Das Urteil", "Der Heizer", "Die Verwandlung" and "Amerika", were entirely subjective in content; in form, however, each was more objective than its predecessor. In "Das Urteil", the only real expression of his father-fixation, Kafka was unable to control his sense of animosity and guilt, and produced in consequence an incoherent diary-jotting rather than a work of literature. This was followed by "Der Heizer", Kafka's own comment upon the state of his writing in 1912, in which Karl's decision to abandon the stoker referred, on the biographical level, to Kafka's determination to abandon subjectivity and to evolve a more controlled style. In this he seems to have been successful for his next

work, "Die Verwandlung", while still the product of a personal crisis, could none-the-less be understood and enjoyed without reference to biographical sources. The balance which Kafka established in "Die Verwandlung" between subjectivity of theme and objectivity in form, was completely satisfactory. Yet he seems to have believed that personal involvement was the enemy of good writing, in conformity with Thomas Mann's dictum: "Liegt Ihnen zu viel an dem, was Sie zu sagen haben, schlägt Ihr Herz zu warm dafür, so können Sie eines vollständigen Fiaskos sicher sein."(5) Kafka's attempt to escape from the world of personal dilemmas by imitating Dickens proved such a chaotic failure in "Amerika" that he reverted in "Der Prozeß" to the method of writing which he had employed in "Die Verwandlung". In neither work is the autobiographical element obtrusive, yet both are essentially subjective.

The similarity between "Die Verwandlung" and "Der Prozeß" is not only a similarity in form but comprises the character and profession of the two heroes, Gregor Samsa and Josef K., the fate which befalls them, their reaction to it and the manner in which their lives are brought to a conclusion. The similarity is obscured to some extent by the difference in length of the two works, but in theme at least, "Der Prozeß" is little more than a protracted version of "Die Verwandlung". Kafka consistently enlarges and elevates the characters, situations and events of the earlier story: the commercial traveller, Gregor Samsa, becomes the bank official, Josef K.; the family is replaced by a powerful and antagonistic hierarchy; and the period during which the hero must suffer is increased from a matter of months to a full year.

Yet in spite of the difference in their social positions, Gregor Samsa and Josef K. lead remarkably similar lives. By normal standards they are ordinary, respectable men, dedicated to their professions, though for different reasons,(6) and undistinguished in either character or action. Both are bachelors; both live rather isolated, though not anchoretic lives. It is the very normality of their backgrounds that makes the fate which befalls them particularly incredible. In both works Kafka immediately presents the reader with a fait accompli: Gregor Samsa has already assumed his beetle form; Josef K. has already been placed under arrest. This might be regarded as nothing more than a matter of technique, but the circumstances in which these events take place are almost identical:

> "Verwandlung": Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt. (7)
>
> "Prozeß": Jemand mußte Josef K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet. (8)

Both men are in bed; both have overslept. They are taken unawares, overcome by unknown forces at that very moment between sleep and awakening when the human being is least in control of his rational faculties. Of Josef K.'s arrest, Emrich writes:

> Er befindet sich also in jenem Zustand der Zerstreuung, Selbstvergessenheit, Arbeitsbefreiung und noch halben Träumens, in dem alle Helden Kafkas aus ihrer normierten Alltagswelt herausgeworfen werden. (9)

Emrich would find it difficult to justify the generalisation "alle Helden", but what he says is most certainly true of Gregor Samsa. Indeed, the similarity between his fate and Josef K.'s is such that the

actual terms of their afflictions could be readily interchanged. Gregor Samsa is "arrested" in the sense that the normal course of his life is brought to a sudden halt. (At one point he speaks of himself as "gefangen"); Josef K. is "transformed" in the sense that the whole manner of his existence is altered overnight. (To his nephew, Josef's uncle says: "Du bist verwandelt".) Thus, in theory, Kafka confronts his two heroes with the same fantastic situation. Though the result would have been less convincing, the commercial traveller could have been arrested and the bank official metamorphosed. Samsa's torture is of the crudest nature, but it is appropriate: he is an unintelligent person of little insight, a man who, in his business life, was used to crawling, metaphorically speaking, long before he took to crawling around the walls. For the socially and intellectually superior Josef K., Kafka has devised a more refined, more subtle torture: anxiety. While Samsa is physically transformed, the hero of "Der Prozeß" is plunged into a state of terrifying mental uncertainty. Prone to speculation and self-analysis, Josef K. is not actively tormented; he is simply left to torment himself. This self-torment is a characteristic of all of Kafka's works. Having presented his reader in a few lines with the initial situation, he virtually abandons external action and devotes the greater part of the narrative to a description of his hero's mental attitude in the face of that situation. The tedium of much of Kafka's writing, and of "Der Prozeß" in particular, results from this sparsity of action. Friedrich Middelhauve writes:

> Daher aber rührt gleichzeitig die erregende Monotonie vieler kafkascher Erzählungen, denn nach diesem alles in sich tragenden Beginn geschieht nun nichts wirklich Neues mehr, und

> ein tatsächlicher Fortgang ist unmöglich. Alles Weitere ist nur immer noch Ausdeuten, Offenbaren, Aufschließen und Durchleiden des unabänderlichen Tatbestandes, den die ersten Worte der Erzählung bereits endgültig bezeugt haben. (10)

It is not surprising, then, that the most marked similarity between "Die Verwandlung" and "Der Prozeß" is to be found in the mental attitudes of the two heroes rather than in social position or physical behaviour. Indeed, these external factors are responsible for the superficial differences in their reactions: Gregor Samsa, the underdog, passively hopes for improvement but never conquers his servile business nature, while Josef K., the man of authority, actively attacks his accusers and demands explanations. Yet the two men share a fear of change. For them the status quo represents security, quiet, the avoidance of conflict. Their first reaction is therefore to ignore what has happened, or rather to pretend that it has not happened at all. Both avoid conflict by repressing it; they defend the status quo by attacking change, by regarding what is in fact reality as a foolish delusion:

> "Verwandlung": Wie wäre es, wenn ich noch ein wenig weiterschliefe und alle Narrheiten vergäße. (11)
>
> "Prozeß": Man konnte zwar das Ganze als Spaß ansehen, als einen groben Spaß, den ihm aus unbekannten Gründen, vielleicht weil heute sein dreißigster Geburtstag war, die Kollegen in der Bank veranstaltet hatten. K. mußte dieser Schaustellung ein Ende machen. (12)

But time brings no improvement in the position of either man: Gregor Samsa is unable to "sleep off" his beetle form; Josef K.'s warders

refuse to admit that the whole thing is just a joke. When pretence fails, both men turn to rationalization. Samsa explains his physical transformation in terms of a physical illness; Josef K. his spiritual arrest in terms of mental unpreparedness:

> "Verwandlung": Er erinnerte sich, schon öfters im Bett irgendeinen vielleicht durch ungeschicktes Liegen erzeugten, leichten Schmerz empfunden zu haben, der sich dann beim Aufstehen als reine Einbildung herausstellte, und er war gespannt, wie sich seine heutigen Vorstellungen allmählich auflösen würden. (13)
>
> "Prozeß": Ich halte es einfach nicht einmal für etwas Gelehrtes, sondern überhaupt für nichts. Ich wurde überrumpelt, das war es. Kurz, hätte ich vernünftig gehandelt, so wäre nichts weiter geschehen, es wäre alles, was werden wollte, erstickt worden. (14)

Though he claimed to despise psychoanalysis, Kafka made full use of Freudian theories in his early works.(15) "Die Verwandlung" is a textbook example of repression, "Das Urteil" of the obsessional guilt-complex. One might deduce that Kafka was disingenuous in his abuse of psychoanalysis but he may well have feared that nothing more would be seen in his work than a case-history of neurosis. If it existed, that fear was prophetic, for the more extreme psychological critics (Goodmann, Mounier, Neider etc.)(16) have produced nauseating and grotesque theories which, by implication rather than in so many words, divest Kafka's work of all literary merit. Kafka was a conscious artist, fully aware of the principles of Freudian psychology, principles which he used as a foundation for much of his work. The impression given by Goodmann, and at times by Neider, is that these

psychological principles used Kafka, that his writing was itself nothing more than a symptom of the all-pervading neurosis. This brings us back to the comparison between "Die Verwandlung" and "Der Prozeß". Josef K., the hero of the second work, proceeds through exactly the same mental states as Gregor Samsa: pretence, rationalization, irrational hope, involuntary acceptance and positive resignation. The psychological phenomenon has become a literary theme. Consider the almost exact duplication of the third mental state, irrational hope:

"Verwandlung": Und ein Weilchen lang lag er ruhig mit schwachem Atem, als erwarte er vielleicht von der völligen Stille die Wiederkehr der wirklichen und selbstverständlichen Verhältnisse. (17)

"Prozeß": ... es war jedoch alles still, man wartete offenbar gespannt auf das Folgende, es bereitete sich vielleicht in der Stille ein Ausbruch vor, der allem ein Ende machen würde. (18)

So successful are Kafka's "disguises" for the same basic situation that at first sight "Die Verwandlung" and "Der Prozeß" bear no similarity whatsoever. In the one a commercial traveller is transformed into a beetle; in the other a bank official is suddenly arrested. Superficially at least, these events belong to two entirely different genres: the "Märchen" and the "Kriminalroman". It is clear that in the two following quotations, which mark the fourth stage in the mental development of Samsa and K., the events described bear no external similarity:

"Verwandlung": Das Essen machte ihm bald nicht mehr das geringste Vergnügen, und so nahm er zur Zerstreuung die Gewohnheit an, kreuz und quer über Wände und Plafond zu kriechen. Besonders

oben auf der Decke hing er gern; es war ganz anders, als das Liegen auf dem Fußboden; man atmete freier; ein leichtes Schwingen ging durch den Körper; und in der fast glücklichen Zerstreutheit, in der sich Gregor dort oben befand, konnte es geschehen, daß er zu seiner eigenen Überraschung sich losließ und auf den Boden klatschte. Aber nun hatte er natürlich seinen Körper ganz anders in der Gewalt als früher und beschädigte sich selbst bei einem so großen Falle nicht. (19)

"Prozeß": Der Gedanke an den Prozeß verließ ihn nicht mehr. Öfters schon hatte er überlegt, ob es nicht gut wäre, eine Verteidigungsschrift auszuarbeiten und bei Gericht einzureichen. Er wollte darin eine kurze Lebensbeschreibung vorlegen und bei jedem irgendwie wichtigeren Ereignis erklären, aus welchen Gründen er so gehandelt hatte, ob diese Handlungsweise nach seinem gegenwärtigen Urteil zu verwerfen oder zu billigen war und welche Gründe er für dieses oder jenes anführen konnte. (20)

Gregor's instinctive pleasure in crawling over the walls and ceiling here corresponds to K.'s complete immersion in his case, for both men have involuntarily accepted their positions: Samsa has abandoned all remnants of humanity and thinks and acts like a beetle; K. has abandoned his opposition to the Court and thinks and acts like an accused man. This acceptance leads in turn to the decision to die, which represents a positive realisation of the futility of resistance:

"Verwandlung": Seine Meinung darüber, daß er verschwinden müsse, war womöglich noch entschiedener als die seiner Schwester. (21)

"Prozeß": .... bloß die Wertlosigkeit seines Widerstandes kam ihm gleich zum Bewußtsein. Es war nichts Heldenhaftes, wenn er widerstand, wenn er jetzt den Herren Schwierigkeiten bereitete, wenn er jetzt in der Abwehr noch den letzten Schein des Lebens zu

genießen versuchte. Er setzte sich in Gang, und von der Freude, die er dadurch den Herren machte, ging noch etwas auf ihn selbst über. (22)

Since Josef K. is arrested in exactly the same circumstances as those in which Gregor Samsa is transformed, since he reacts to his arrest in exactly the same way as Samsa to his transformation, it seems reasonable to assume that the two events have the same meaning. If this is so, the Court must be seen as a part of K. himself and not as something external; the arrest will represent the breakthrough of K.'s consciousness of some neglected duty to the self,(23) and the execution his suicide in the face of some irresolvable conflict. Further, if the Court represents no external reality, several of the existing critical theories must be invalid. It will not be possible to say, for instance, that Josef K. is condemned by some antagonistic hierarchy or divine power,(24) that he is suddenly afflicted with a fatal disease(25) or that he is attacked by his father.(26) Other and more positive reasons for rejecting these theories must of course be given, but it seems wise to leave them temporarily aside and to look instead at the major crisis which Kafka faced between 1914 and 1916, the years during which "Der Prozeß" was written. This was during the period of Kafka's engagement to F.B., of his most desperate inner struggle: to get married. In the next section we will examine the nature of that struggle and later its relationship to "Der Prozeß".

Heiraten, eine Familie gründen, alle Kinder, welche kommen, hinnehmen, in dieser unsicheren Welt erhalten und gar noch ein

> wenig führen, ist meiner Überzeugung nach das Äußerste, das einem Menschen überhaupt gelingen kann. (27)

In these words from the "Brief an den Vater" Kafka summarises his attitude towards marriage. One may, like Brod, accept them uncritically ("Von der Ehe hat Franz Kafka den höchsten Begriff gehabt.")[28] or regard them as suspect, bearing in mind that they come from Kafka's least genuine piece of writing. Is it in fact marriage of which Kafka has "the highest conception", and if so, of what particular aspect of marriage? No mention is made in this quotation of the joy of companionship or having children; there is no reference to an idyllic form of life or indeed to the married state at all. One might rephrase Brod's comment as follows: "Franz Kafka had the highest conception of the difficulties involved in getting married." Almost every word in Kafka's summary ("gründen, erhalten, unsicher, das Äußerste, gelingen") suggests effort, struggle and insurmountable obstacles. And yet no single theme receives more attention in Kafka's diaries than this. Between 1912 and 1917 every other subject is crowded out. The majority of these entries take the form of bachelor-laments: purely negative in outlook, they describe marriage as an antidote to misery, rather than as something valuable in itself:

> Es scheint so arg, Junggeselle zu sein, als alter Mann unter schwerer Wahrung der Würde um Aufnahme zu bitten, wenn man einen Abend mit Menschen verbringen will, sein Essen in einer Hand sich nach Hause zu tragen, niemanden mit ruhiger Zuversicht faul erwarten können, nur mit Mühe oder Ärger jemanden beschenken können, vor dem Haustor Abschied nehmen, niemals mit seiner Frau sich die Treppen hinaufdrängen zu können, kranksein und nur den

> Trost der Aussicht aus seinem Fenster haben, wenn man sich aufsetzen kann, in seinem Zimmer nur Seitentüren haben, die in fremde Wohnungen führen, die Fremdtheit seiner Verwandten zu spüren bekommen, fremde Kinder anstaunen müssen und nicht immerfort wiederholen dürfen: ich habe keine. (29)

In apparent contradiction to this purely negative outlook, the following two short entries appear:

> Das unendliche, tiefe, warme, erlösende Glück, neben dem Korb seines Kindes zu sitzen, der Mutter gegenüber. (30)

> Die Erweiterung und Erhöhung der Existenz durch eine Heirat. Predigtspruch. Aber ich ahne es fast. (31)

Yet even here the word "erlösend" seems to imply a spiritual, perhaps even physical panacea, to attach to marriage an almost utilitarian value. Indeed, nowhere in Kafka's writing is there any real sign of a spontaneous, unmotivated desire to get married. His panegyrics are, in fact, nothing more than "sermon-texts", acceptable moral and social utterings, intended more for the edification of others than for the self. This accounts for the very general, almost philosophic nature of most of his remarks. The married lives of his friends, threatening in their nearness, are rarely discussed. It is the concept of marriage with which Kafka is concerned, since it permits him to theorise and therefore to avoid the reality of his own pathological condition:

> Ich beneide nicht das einzelne Ehepaar, ich beneide nur alle Ehepaare, - auch wenn ich nur ein Ehepaar beneide, beneide ich eigentlich das ganze Eheglück in seiner unendlichen Vielgestalt,

> im Glück einer einzigen Ehe würde ich selbst im günstigsten Fall wahrscheinlich verzweifeln. (32)

To explain this last paradox, one must eliminate the possibility of such happiness at all, or at least for Kafka. He is really saying: "The happiness which others find in marriage, I could never hope to find", and this is true. It was his refusal to recognise that truth that caused the torments in his life between 1912 and 1917. The whole pattern of his relationship with F.B., of broken and renewed engagements, is evidence of his uncertainty. Speculation on the necessity of marriage leads to an engagement, but the imminent danger of a permanent relationship forces him to withdraw at the last moment. There is here a fundamental emotional lack that cannot be glibly explained. There is no evidence to suggest that Kafka was homosexual (though this suggestion is constantly being made) nor that he was impotent. On the contrary, he himself writes: "Das Geschlecht drängt mich, quält mich Tag und Nacht."(33) One possible explanation of the phenomenon is that Kafka failed to establish the normal oedipal relationship with his mother and was therefore incapable of feeling emotionally drawn towards any other woman. Briefly, however, Kafka never married because he never loved. The situation is clearly summarised by Michel Carrouges:

> Il ne faudrait pas croire non plus que Kafka se soit abstenu du mariage à cause seulement de son propre doute sur ses capacités à organiser et à diriger un foyer; il faut bien qu'une certaine impuissance psychique ait contribué à le paralyser. Il a senti l'insuffiance des amours de passage, mais il n'est pas parvenu à aimer assez une femme, pour triompher de tous les obstacles semi-réels, semi-imaginaires qui l'effrayaient. (34)

Kafka's admiration for the married state may be compared to Tonio Kröger's 'Liebe zu den Blonden und Gewöhnlichen'; it is simply not ingenuous.

There is very little love in Kafka, other than for himself. His alienated state is not only self-imposed, it is enjoyed. But since that cannot be stated openly, external causes must be invented in the form of insurmountable obstacles to a normal, happy life.

Throughout his work Kafka uses the father as a symbol of bourgeois normality, and therefore of those qualities which he, the artist, vainly strives to acquire. The difficulty arises that while the father remains the sole object of admiration, the normality which he represents can never be attained. Thus, in a vicious circle, marriage is the prerequisite to escape from the father, and escape from the father is the prerequisite to marriage:

> In Wirklichkeit aber wurden die Heiratsversuche der großartigste und hoffnungsreichste Rettungsversuch. (35)

Kafka is uncritical of his own motives when he speaks of marriage as "die Bürgschaft für die schärfste Selbstbefreiung und Unabhängigkeit."(36) His attitude towards his father demanded something more positive than escape. It required self-justification, equality of achievement and, through that equality, revenge. Kafka was prepared to marry, if only to prove his father's equal, to verify his own capabilities and to take revenge upon the father for his tyranny and mockery in the past:

> Ich hätte eine Familie, das Höchste, was man meiner Meinung nach erreichen kann, also auch das Höchste, das Du erreicht hast, ich wäre Dir ebenbürtig, alle alte und ewig neue Schande und Tyrannei wäre bloß noch Geschichte. (37)

This rare expression of sincere antagonism towards the father is refreshing but short-lived. Kafka is wrong when he says that in the battle with his father he was "bald erledigt"; it never came to a battle at all. In ability to manage human relationships, and marriage in particular, their difference in stature was such that Kafka trembled at the thought of actual contest. If one bears in mind that the step to which Kafka refers in the following quotation is marriage and not, as one might expect, the initial stage in mastering some terrible addiction, it becomes clear that his inability to take that step resulted from a pathological condition:

> Es ist so, wie wenn einer fünf niedrige Treppenstufen hinaufzusteigen hat und ein zweiter nur eine Treppenstufe, die aber, wenigstens für ihn, so hoch ist, wie jene fünf zusammen; der erste wird nicht nur die fünf bewältigen, sondern noch hunderte und tausende weitere, er wird ein großes und sehr anstrengendes Leben geführt haben, aber keine der Stufen, die er erstiegen hat, wird für ihn eine solche Bedeutung gehabt haben, wie für den zweiten jene eine, erste, hohe, für alle seine Kräfte unmöglich zu ersteigende Stufe, zu der er nicht hinauf- und über die er natürlich auch nicht hinauskommt. (38)

To give an appearance of social normality; to surpass his father: both of these were purely personal motives for marrying. But as a Jew, Kafka was faced with an objective, religious duty to found a family.

The continued existence of the "shadchan" or marriage-broker in modern Jewish society is evidence of the importance which Jews attach to family life. Whereas in the Christian Church no pressure is put upon the individual to marry and asceticism may be considered a virtue, Judaism regards the bachelor not only as incomplete but as one who has positively

failed to obey the Word of God. In the six volumes of the Talmud, entitled "Nashim" ("Women"), the Jewish man is urged to marry early and to fulfil the commandment, "Be ye fruitful and multiply":

> He who does not engage in propagation of the race, is as though he sheds blood, for it is said: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed", and this is immediately followed by the text: "And ye, be ye fruitful and multiply." (39)

The logic here is perhaps a little weak, but the meaning is clear: failure to propagate is equated with murder, in much the same way as contraception was once regarded as murder by the more extreme theologians within the Catholic Church.

For his own sake too, the bachelor is urged in the Rabbinic codes to marry, for the unmarried man cannot hope either to receive God's blessing or to find happiness on earth:

> Any man who has no wife, lives without joy, without blessing and without goodness. Without joy, for it is written, "And thou shalt rejoice, thou and thy house"; without blessing, for it is written, "To cause a blessing to rest on thy house"; without goodness, for it is written, "It is not good that the man should be alone." (40)

To find a wife is thus seen not only as advisable but as a definite religious duty. A wife brings with her happiness and blessing; she is the antidote to sin:

> As soon as a man takes a wife, his sins are buried, for it is said, "Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a great good and obtaineth favour of the Lord." (41)

Since the first aim of marriage is propagation, the Rabbis insist that a man should not wait until old age before taking a wife. The stipulated age is twenty. Till then God waits patiently but when His patience is exhausted, He curses the unmarried man:

> Until the age of twenty, the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and waits. When will he take a wife? As soon as one attains twenty and has not married, He exclaims, "Blasted be his bones!" He who is twenty years of age and is not married, spends all his days in sin. (42)

Although he was not an orthodox Jew, it is certain that Kafka was keenly aware of his religious duty to marry and troubled by Judaism's condemnation of the unmarried man. There are in the early diaries several references to Talmudic law, all of them dealing directly or indirectly with women and marriage. In July 1916, immediately after an unsuccessful attempt in Marienbad to re-establish his relationship with Felice Bauer, Kafka prays to be forgiven for having squandered his talents:

> Erbarme dich meiner, ich bin sündig bis in alle Winkel meines Wesens. Hatte aber nicht ganz verächtliche Anlagen, kleine gute Fähigkeiten, wüstete mit ihnen, unberatenes Wesen, das ich war, bin jetzt nahe am Ende, gerade zu einer Zeit, wo sich äußerlich alles zum Guten für mich wenden könnte. Schiebe mich nicht zu den Verlorenen. (43)

But six years later Kafka was still a bachelor:

> Was hast du mit dem Geschenk des Geschlechtes getan? (44)

In 1912, the year in which Kafka met F.B., the problem of marriage came to a head. But then it was related, as was every other problem, to his need to write. Two years later a major crisis in the relationship renewed Kafka's doubts about his ability to marry at all. It was no longer merely a dilemma between marriage and literature; the very possibility of marriage under any circumstances was placed in doubt.

In August of that year (1914) Kafka began work on "Der Prozeß". Like "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung", the novel is an experiment. In it Kafka's actual dilemma has apparently been overcome, for Josef K. has given himself entirely to the bachelor life, without qualms or regret. Through his hero's arrest, trial and execution Kafka demonstrates the impossibility of living such a life, "ohne Vorfahren, ohne Ehe, ohne Nachkommen."(45) In "Das Urteil" he had shown the impossibility of marriage. Together the works form Kafka's "Beweis dessen, daß es unmöglich ist zu leben."(46)

The principal stumbling-block to previous criticism on "Der Prozeß" has been the assumption that the Court represented some social or religious authority. The difficulties of reconciling the corruption and sexuality of the Court with divine justice, its omniscience and omnipresence with human bureaucracy, proved too great for even the more extreme psychologists and metaphysicians. To remove this stumbling-block it is therefore essential to show firstly that the Court cannot be identified with any external authority, and secondly that it exists only as a part of K. himself.

The non-legal nature of the Court is shown in the very first sentence of "Der Prozeß":

Jemand mußte Josef K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet. (47)

This initial statement of K.'s legal innocence is repeated throughout the novel by K. himself and by his social and business associates. To the Inspector, K. says, "Ich folgere das daraus, daß ich angeklagt bin, aber nicht die geringste Schuld auffinden kann, wegen deren man mich anklagen könnte,"(48) an opinion which is supported by even the lesser members of the bank hierarchy, "denn dieser sei ein guter und gerechter Herr."(49)

K.'s legal innocence is beyond doubt and indeed it is never called in doubt. The impression that it is, lies in K.'s own mind and perhaps in the reader's, but nowhere in the novel does the Court accuse the hero of any social crime or look for support to normal legal procedures or to the more direct methods of the state police. K.'s initial confusion results, in fact, from his insistence upon his social status and upon his innocence in the eyes of the law. He searches for documentary evidence of his identity and his position, produces his bicycle-licence and birth-certificate, only to have them pushed aside with the rebuff, "Was kümmern uns denn die?"(50) It gradually becomes clear to K. that it is not he, but the Court which has infringed the law of the country. He abandons the idea of calling his solicitor, realising that legal arguments can carry no weight before this "illegal" organisation. The law is, in fact, on K.'s side; people have entered his home without permission, stolen his food and clothing, insulted and browbeaten him. Yet although the police are his allies, he makes no attempt to gain their protection, for he is afraid and insecure: afraid of the power of this unknown court, and insecure in his

protestations of innocence. Kafka leaves the reader in no doubt that his hero is legally innocent for at the most perilous moment in K.'s career, as he is led to his execution, the State offers him its protection. By refusing that protection K. becomes an accessary to his own murder. It is his first social crime and he commits it in complete harmony with the Court:

> Sie kamen durch einige ansteigende Gassen, in denen hie und da Polizisten standen oder gingen; bald in der Ferne, bald in nächster Nähe. Einer mit buschigem Schnurrbart, die Hand am Griff des Säbels, trat wie mit Absicht nahe an die nicht ganz unverdächtige Gruppe. Die Herren stockten, der Polizeimann schien schon den Mund zu öffnen, da zog K. mit Macht die Herren vorwärts. Öfters drehte er sich vorsichtig um, ob der Polizeimann nicht folge; als sie aber eine Ecke zwischen sich und dem Polizeimann hatten, fing K. zu laufen an, die Herren mußten trotz großer Atemnot auch mit laufen. (51)

The illegality of the Court's methods makes it unlikely that it is of a bureaucratic nature, since bureaucracy relies entirely on the law of the State for its authority. Certainly, the external description of the Court offices suggests the Prague bureaucratic system of which Kafka had experience both as a lawyer and as an insurance official. The long corridors filled with humiliated, demoralised clients, the inaccessibility of higher officials, the airless overcrowded atmosphere: Kafka was familiar with all of this and deeply sympathetic towards the many insurance claimants who hopelessly tried to disentangle themselves from the red tape of the bureaucratic system. To Max Brod he complained: "Sie kommen zu uns bitten. Statt die Anstalt zu stürmen und alles kurz und klein zu schlagen, kommen sie bitten."(52)

The smooth running of any bureaucratic system depends, however, on the unquestioning acceptance by the individual of certain arbitrary codes and regulations. Yet just as K. upholds the law of the State, so he, and not the Court, insists upon recognition of these codes and regulations. The only true bureaucrat in "Der Prozeß" is K. himself. The search for identification papers is evidence not only of a dependence upon the law but of a bureaucratic belief in the infallibility of the document. K. insists upon social correctness and refuses to engage in conversation before he has been properly introduced; this one expects from a bureaucrat, whose first duty is formally to establish his client's identity. To the warder Franz, K. declares: "Ich will weder hierbleiben, noch von Ihnen angesprochen werden, solange Sie sich mir nicht vorstellen."(53)

Yet the Court shows no interest either in K.'s name or in his social position. During the first interrogation he is asked. "Sie sind Zimmermaler?" His reply, "Nein, sondern erster Prokurist einer großen Bank",(54) evokes howls of laughter throughout the Court, for Josef K. has made himself foolish by appealing to the one criterion which the Court does not recognise: position, social standing, etc. Of the importance and meaning of one's name, André Németh writes:

> Le nom - notre nom - est chose mystérieuse. Nous le disons, nous l'écrivons, nous en faisons notre signature, qui est notre "signe", qui "signifie" notre essentiel, car le nom est bien plus qu'une simple façon de dire, il a comme une couverture or, c'est lui qu'on connaît, c'est lui qui, aux yeux du monde, a telle ou telle qualité, dont l'énonce provoque telle ou telle réaction, c'est à lui que s'appliquent les jugements de la

> société et, par un choc en retour, ces jugements réagissent sur nous-même, on peut dire que moi et mon nom, nous ne faisons qu'un. Outre son rôle sociale, le nom a une signification qui le dépose en importance. Pour la théologie mystique juive le nom équivaut à la chose elle-même. (55)

What Németh refers to as a part of "Jewish mystic theology", is now a strongly held tradition in Jewish family life. The common habit of calling a child after a parent or grandparent is avoided by Jews, if the parent or grandparent is still alive, in the belief that, in taking a person's name, you take his life. But tradition and actual practice do not always coincide. The function of the name is almost purely social: it is an aid to communication. The signature does not have the mysterious qualities which Németh attributes to it, but is a method of identification. Further, in speech, a person's name is used only by others, a linguistic device standing only for those qualities which they have observed and which therefore must remain external and superficial. These are indeed the qualities, upon whose recognition K. is so insistent and whose importance the Court denies. If there is any one symbol for what Németh calls "l'essentiel", it is not the name but the pronoun "I", the "ego", which is the psychological term for the self.

It would, of course, be wrong to maintain that a bureaucracy must necessarily be run on legal principles. The administration of a corrupt or dictatorial government must itself be corrupt and dictatorial, since it is only through its administration that a government functions at all. To those critics who saw in Kafka the prophet of modern times, "Der Prozeß" thus became a prophetic novel depicting the horrors of National Socialism.(56)

Nor was this belief entirely without foundation: under the Hitler régime it was not uncommon for a man, and particularly for a Jew, to be arrested without warning, dragged from his bed (perhaps by a man wearing "ein anliegendes schwarzes Kleid, das, ähnlich den Reiseanzügen, mit verschiedenen Falten, Taschen, Schnallen, Knöpfen und einem Gürtel versehen war ") and executed without a trial, and without being told the nature of his crime. But this hypothesis is simply too weak for serious consideration. The description of the warder, Franz, could fit almost any police-official, gangster or private detective. Josef K. is not incarcerated but left to pursue his business in complete physical freedom. There was no period of probation for the Jew under the Hitler dictatorship. One must ask oneself whether a man, whose life was imperilled by the forces of an antagonistic dictatorship, would voluntarily put himself into their hands, whether he would refuse the opportunity of fleeing the country, an opportunity which K. is offered by his uncle, and finally whether in 1914 Kafka could possibly have had any foreknowledge of the crimes which the National Socialists were to commit twenty years later. Kafka's Court does not and cannot represent either the law of the State, the bureaucratic system or the evil machinations of a dictatorship.

Leaving aside for the moment the suggestion that the Court is a part of K. himself, the only remaining theory is that K., with all of mankind, is under the curse of original sin, that he is called by God to recognise that sin and repent and that, because of his unwillingness or inability to do so, he is eventually destroyed. So many critics have taken this view that it is difficult to select one as an example. In his book

"Die offenen Geheimtüren Franz Kafkas", Norbert Fürst writes:

> Die geradezu unglaubwürdige Allgemeinheit von K.s Apologie läßt keinen Zweifel, daß es sich um dies und kein anderes Verbrechen handelt: das Verbrechen, als Mensch geboren zu sein. (57)

The corruption, sexuality and injustice of the Court are then explained by Brod, among others, in terms of the incommensurability of divine and human understanding:

> Ganz ähnlich tut Gott im Buche "Hiob" das, was dem Menschen absurd und ungerecht erscheint. Aber es erscheint eben nur dem Menschen so, und was als letztes Resultat bei Hiob wie bei Kafka sich ergibt, ist die Feststellung, daß das Maß, mit dem der Mensch arbeitet, nicht jenes ist, nach dem in der Welt des Absoluten gemessen wird: (58)

God is just, but His justice is beyond human understanding. To K., and clearly to the reader since he too is human, the judgements of the Court must appear irrational and cruel. Yet he, like Job, must accept its wisdom and search his own soul in faith, rather than try to make comprehensible what cannot be understood:

> Die göttliche Gerechtigkeit ist nach Kafkas Ansicht nicht zu verstehen. Man soll sie widerspruchlos als unabänderlich und notwendig annehmen, auch wenn sie unbillig dünkt. Der Prozeß macht jeden Anspruch auf ein angenehmes und gesichertes Leben hinfällig. (59)

Kafka, we know, was strongly attracted to both the story of

Abraham and of Job. He read the works of Kierkegaard and was deeply troubled by the problem of faith. But there are many indications that "Der Prozeß" is not a religious novel. Can it be a coincidence that the years during which "Der Prozeß" was written correspond so closely to those of his engagement to Felice Bauer? Why is such stress laid in the novel upon Josef K.'s isolated existence and upon the crudely sexual atmosphere of the Court? How could Kafka have avoided making some mention in his diaries of the tremendous theme which he proposed to treat in "Der Prozeß"? Perhaps more than anywhere else in Kafka, interpretation depends here on personal opinion and upon one question in particular: is it reasonable to believe that by this obscene, unintelligible, terrifying and loathsome organisation, Kafka intended to depict divine justice? Roy Pascal reaches the surely inevitable conclusion that it is not:

> And then we have the religious interpretations of Brod and Muir, who see the courts as the symbol of divine Justice, and Josef K.'s execution as the judgement of God. What a symbol of divine law, not to speak of grace, these courts are, without justice or mercy, hysterical and capricious, sordid and corrupt, inaccessible to the mediator as to the defendant! If Heller(60) could convincingly attack a similar interpretation of "The Castle", how much more forced and repugnant does it appear in "The Trial". (61)

We must now see in how far Kafka's conception of his own position as an unmarried man of thirty, corresponds to his description of Josef K. In his essay in "Euphorion", Gerhard Kaiser denies the existence of any such correspondence:

> Wir sehen hier schon, daß die beliebte Gleichung Josef K. = Kafka nicht aufgeht. Als Held steht nicht die hochdifferenzierte Individualität, sondern ein mittlerer Charakter, im Sinne der klassischen Romantheorie, vor uns, ja fast ein Anonymus, ein Mann, der als einzige Person des Romans keinen Namen, sondern nur einen Kennbuchstaben trägt, eben K. Dieser K. ist ein nützliches Glied der menschlichen Gesellschaft und juristisch uninteressant. (62)

It seems unfortunate, when attempting to dismiss any comparison between Kafka and his hero, to refer specifically to his use of the initial K., in view of Kafka's known interest in anagrams and cryptographs. But Kaiser's misunderstanding of Kafka's method is more fundamental than that. As we have already seen from a study of "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung", Kafka does not merely reproduce situations from his own life, but provides solutions to his own dilemmas by carrying one of the possible courses of action to its logical conclusion. Kafka was neither a successful business man nor a beetle, but it is clear that both early short stories refer to situations in his own life. One cannot expect to find "Kafka" in any of these works, for though they are based upon the author's own experience, they are not autobiographies. Kafka's works are complex hypotheses, experiments in which the validity of a certain course of action is put to the test. We cannot therefore expect to find Josef K. on the horns of a marriage dilemma, as Kafka was; he will either have married or have given himself over entirely to the pleasures (and the emotional disadvantages) of a bachelor-life. Since Josef K. is not married, the latter must be the case.

Josef K.'s sexual pursuits correspond in general terms to what

has come to be regarded as normal in successful business-executive circles; and he is indeed a successful business-executive. Throughout the novel K.'s lofty position in the bank hierarchy is stressed:

> Er hatte es verstanden, sich in der Bank in verhältnismäßig kurzer Zeit zu seiner hohen Stellung emporzuarbeiten und sich, von allen anerkannt, in dieser Stellung zu erhalten. (63)

His position is, in fact, the one thing in K.'s life about which he is completely confident. It is his bulwark against change or disturbance, his justification in the eyes of society. To K., the executive, the bank represents the fortress of superficial existence:

> In der Bank zum Beispiel bin ich vorbereitet, dort könnte mir etwas Derartiges unmöglich geschehen, ich habe dort einen eigenen Diener, das allgemeine Telephon und das Bürotelephon stehen vor mir auf dem Tisch, immerfort kommen Leute, Parteien und Beamte, außerdem aber und vor allem bin ich dort immerfort im Zusammenhang der Arbeit, daher geistesgegenwärtig, es würde mir geradezu ein Vergnügen machen, dort einer solchen Sache gegenübergestellt zu werden. (64)

K.'s attitude to his position is therefore one of extreme conservatism. He sacrifices independent, unorthodox or imaginative action to social and business security. His life is formalised and planned, dominated by a routine that includes even his sexual relationships:

> In diesem Frühjahr pflegte K. die Abende in der Weise zu verbringen, daß er nach der Arbeit einen kleinen Spaziergang allein oder mit Beamten machte und dann in eine Bierstube ging,

> wo er an einem Stammtisch mit meist älteren Herren gewöhnlich bis elf Uhr beisammensaß. Außerdem ging K. einmal in der Woche zu einem Mädchen namens Elsa, die während der Nacht bis in den späten Morgen als Kellnerin in einer Weinstube bediente und während des Tages nur vom Bett aus Besuche empfing. (65)

Josef K.'s relationship with Elsa is thus part of a carefully constructed plan for existence, a plan conceived with one purpose: to avoid conflict on any level. Anything that cannot be brought fully under control is a threat to K.'s social and psychological stability and must be eliminated; emotional commitments constitute just such a threat. To prevent this possibility, K. keeps his human relationships down to an essential minimum. Through his meetings with Hasterer the advocate, and his legal associates, he satisfies his gregarious instincts and intellectual needs, at the same time gaining information and contacts helpful in his career; through his relationship with the prostitute, Elsa, he satisfies his sexual instincts. Like Kafka, K. is sexually normal; like many a business-executive, he is promiscuous and immoral. The gratification of his sexual desires is essential to the psychological calm which he strives to preserve, but no more than that. K.'s relationships with women are purely utilitarian and devoid of all emotion. Thus he remains untroubled by moral scruples, abandons one mistress for the other without regret and willingly accepts the sexual overtures of the many women who find him attractive:

> Die Frau verlockte ihn wirklich, er fand trotz allem Nachdenken keinen haltbaren Grund dafür, warum er der Verlockung nicht nachgeben sollte. (66)

With the arrest, a marked change occurs in K.'s sexual attitude, a change that becomes apparent in his relationship with the typist, Fräulein Bürstner. Before discussing that change, it is, however, necessary to know something about Kafka and Felice Bauer: Kafka met F.B., a stern, unattractive woman, in August 1912. The history of their relationship from then until December 1917, is one of broken and renewed engagements, of self-torment and soul-searching, of an impossible struggle to overcome his fear of marriage and of the permanent liaison. The effect of their meeting was twofold: firstly, it compelled Kafka to examine his whole attitude to marriage, to regard it not as something unreal and indefinitely postponable, but as an urgent and present challenge; secondly, it forced from him the unwilling admission that he was psychologically incapable of meeting that challenge, that the fundamental emotion of love was absent in his personality. The engagement thus became a matter of the greatest urgency; vital issues were at stake; it was, as Kafka himself described it, a matter of life and death:

> Ich kann nicht glauben, daß in irgendeinem Märchen um irgendeine Frau mehr und verzweifelter gekämpft worden ist als um dich in mir, seit dem Anfang und immer von neuem und vielleicht für immer. (67)

In brief, the relatively complacent attitude which he had taken towards marriage was shattered overnight. The meeting was thus positive and negative at the same time, for while it compelled Kafka to make an honest assessment of his position with regard to marriage, it also convinced him of his incapacity.

In the original "Prozeß"-manuscript the name Fräulein Bürstner appears as "F.B." These are the initials which Kafka uses in his diaries when referring to Felice Bauer. They are also the initials of Georg Bendemann's fiancée in "Das Urteil". This may seem a relatively unimpressive point, but it is none-the-less a positive indication that in writing "Der Prozeß" Kafka had at least some aspect of his engagement in mind. This is confirmed by the change in Josef K.'s sexual attitude. The complacency and self-confidence which he betrays in all his other relationships with women, is suddenly replaced by a sense of urgency. In spite of his professed indifference to "das kleine Schreibmaschinenfräulein, das ihm nicht lange Widerstand leisten sollte", K. reveals something resembling desperation in his attempts to see Fräulein Bürstner: he abandons his normal routine by putting off his weekly visit to Elsa, cowers like a criminal behind his door, while waiting for her to return at night, and calls her name with an urgency that suggests needs deeper than mere sexual gratification: "Es klang wie eine Bitte, nicht wie ein Anruf."(68) In the interview which follows, K.'s sexual impatience grows. Finally he seizes her and kisses her on the lips and all over the face, "wie ein durstiges Tier mit der Zunge das endlich gefundene Quellwasser hinjagt."(69) The suggestion is clear that K. unconsciously hopes to find with Fräulein Bürstner a relationship deeper than that which he has had with Elsa and with his other mistresses. That hope remains unfulfilled, not because Fräulein Bürstner is unwilling to have anything to do with K., but because he confuses the superficial need for sexual gratification, of which he is aware, with the deeper need for emotional gratification, of which he is unaware.

K. returns to his own room suffering from a frustration which, because of his complete reliance upon physical love, he finds incomprehensible:

> Kurz darauf lag K. in seinem Bett. Er schlief sehr bald ein, vor dem Einschlafen dachte er noch ein Weilchen über sein Verhalten nach, er war damit zufrieden, wunderte sich aber, daß er nicht noch zufriedener war. (70)

In the next few days, K. makes repeated and unsuccessful attempts to get into contact with Fräulein Bürstner, days in which he manages to regain not only his mental composure but also his belief in dignified behaviour, discretion and the rational, conservative approach to life which has been the key-note of his success. He has sufficient insight to realise that his sudden attack upon Fräulein Bürstner is responsible for her coolness, but it is doubtful whether his pleas for a further interview are motivated by a sincere desire to atone for his previous behaviour or by the less honourable intention of using this second opportunity to make a fresh attack with more discreet and effective tactics; and this doubt is entertained by Fräulein Bürstner herself. Through the "impartial" intermediary, Fräulein Montag, K. learns that the typist, though not deliberately refusing such an interview, can simply see no point in it, that she knows what the conversation would be about and that it would be to nobody's benefit if it actually took place. The situation is almost commonplace: the insistent lover, the unwilling girl, the intermediary. It is an adolescent game, befitting the adolescent sexual mentality of Kafka's hero. Paradoxically, the bank official, Josef K., is taught a lesson in maturity by the typist, Fräulein Bürstner:

> Sie sagte hierbei, daß auch Ihnen jedenfalls nicht viel an der Unterredung liegen könne, denn Sie wären nur durch einen Zufall auf einen derartigen Gedanken gekommen und würden selbst auch ohne besondere Erklärung, wenn nicht schon jetzt, so doch sehr bald die Sinnlosigkeit des Ganzen erkennen. (71)

With this piece of advice K.'s relationship with Fräulein Bürstner ends for ever. Through his behaviour he destroys not only his one real chance of creating for himself a new and full life but also, though he is unaware of it, his hopes of ever justifying himself before the Court:

> Kafka schildert hier die niedrigste Sexualität, die in der Frau nur ein Objekt (des Genusses, allenfalls noch des Trostbedürfnisses) sieht, ohne die Personalität der Frau anzuerkennen. Seine Sünde ist die mangelhafte, die nicht bis ans Ende durchgeführte Liebe. (72)

In assessing the importance of K.'s relationship with Fräulein Bürstner for the meaning of the novel as a whole, three points must be considered. Firstly, it is as a direct result of his arrest that Josef K. comes into contact with the typist; secondly, Fräulein Bürstner appears on the two most important days in K.'s life, the day of his arrest and the day of his execution; thirdly, K.'s own statement: "das Verhältnis zu Fräulein Bürstner schien entsprechend dem Prozeß zu schwanken."(73)

It is surely significant that K. is first officially notified of his arrest not in his own room, but in Fräulein Bürstner's bedroom, and that it is the guilt which he feels for having been the cause of such an intrusion that compels him to take an interest in the girl whom he had previously chosen to ignore. On this evidence alone, it seems not unreasonable to suggest that the Court deliberately gives K. the opportunity

of meeting Fräulein Bürstner, that he has not yet been finally condemned and that the success or failure of this relationship may well determine the outcome of his trial. In short, Josef K. is "put on probation" for a period of exactly one year, from his thirtieth to his thirty-first birthday. In the interview with the inspector, K. is told:

> Sie sind verhaftet, gewiß, aber das soll Sie nicht hindern, Ihren Beruf zu erfüllen. Sie sollen auch in Ihrer gewöhnlichen Lebensweise nicht gehindert sein. (74)

To this, he replies:

> "Es scheint aber dann nicht einmal die Mitteilung der Verhaftung sehr notwendig gewesen zu sein." "Es war meine Pflicht", sagte der Aufseher. (75)

In other words: "It was my duty to inform you that you have been acting wrongly and that if you do not make some attempt to alter your behaviour, you will be punished." The meaning of the arrest is therefore to make K. conscious of his guilt and to give him an opportunity to reform. But since he is told nothing by the inspector of the nature of his crime, since the only change in his life which the arrest effects is his meeting with Fräulein Bürstner, it must be through his relationship with her that K. is expected to realise his guilt and to overcome it. At the beginning of the novel, K. has not yet fully committed the crime for which he is later executed. His guilt lies partly in his behaviour within the novel itself:

> Das Urteil kommt nicht mit einemmal, das Verfahren geht allmählich ins Urteil über. (76)

In his book, "Kafka's Prayer", Paul Goodmann carries this interpretation one stage further:

> The meaning of the double beginning seems to me to be this; that it is falling in love with Fräulein Bürstner that breaks into Josef K.'s ordinary course of life, stirs deep images and feelings and makes him aware of himself; he then finds that he is under arrest. And contrariwise, being under arrest, he finds that he cannot give himself in love to the Fräulein. (77)

Goodmann's interpretation is ingenious and entirely in keeping with the biographical background to Kafka's novel. The "awareness of himself" which Goodmann describes, is exactly the same effect as that produced by Kafka's meeting with F.B. The state of being under arrest, by which Goodmann, whose interpretations are purely Freudian, presumably means "psychic arrest", might also refer to the whole period of Kafka's engagement, during which he found himself psychologically incapable of positive action. Yet in spite of its plausibility, this interpretation actually reverses the meaning of the text, for Goodmann fails to differentiate between the auto-biographical basis of the novel and the novel itself. From a purely chronological standpoint his interpretation is untenable, for Josef K. is arrested <u>before</u> he meets Fräulein Bürstner. Goodmann sees the arrest as a stumbling-block to K.'s love for the typist, while the whole meaning of the novel is that K. fails to love anyone, in spite of the warning given to him by the Court and the opportunity of a full, emotional relationship which he is offered. Far from standing in the way of Josef K.'s love for Fräulein Bürstner, the Court encourages it, for the Court is K.'s conscience on the issue of marriage. Neglected and debased, it reasserts itself and demands

recognition: Josef K. is put on trial. Through reason, in the form of the Advocate, K. tries to overcome his conscience; through art, in the form of Titorelli, he tries to evade it; through his relationships with women, he tries to forget it. In each of these attempts he fails.

The analogy between Court and conscience is vital to the meaning of "Der Prozeß". It explains the remoteness and inaccessibility of the Court, its incoherence and power; it explains Josef K.'s compulsive interest in the Court's functionings, his almost morbid eagerness to submit himself to its judgement; it explains the hero's paradoxical position of being physically free and yet under arrest; finally, it explains the uneasy unity that exists between accuser and accused, their attraction to and reliance upon one another. René Dauvin writes:

> K.'s arrest is the beginning of a nightmare or, more exactly, of a series of nightmares. The action, therefore, takes place in Kafka's soul, and the plot is symbolic of manifest or repressed tendencies. The characters of "The Trial", whether they argue with K. or agree with him, are aspects of his ego. The novel is a dialogue Kafka has with himself. (78)

K. comes into contact with two of these "alter-egos" on the day of his arrest. They are the warders, Franz and Wilhelm. Kafka's choice of names is never haphazard. It is therefore doubly significant that Franz, whose name immediately suggests an identification with Kafka, later claims in the whipping-scene that he wants to get married: "Unten vor der Bank wartet meine arme Braut."(79) Yet when K. leaves the bank himself, he can see no sign of a girl waiting for anybody:

> Die Bemerkung Franzens, daß seine Braut auf ihn warte, erwies sich als eine allerdings verzeihliche Lüge, die nur den Zweck gehabt hatte, größeres Mitleid zu erwecken. (80)

The biographical implications of this are clear: Franz, like Kafka, has no sweetheart and no real intention of getting married, but he is prepared to lie about both, "[um] größeres Mitleid zu erwecken."

K.'s reaction to the appearance of the warders and to his subsequent arrest, suggests the ambivalence which accompanies a sense of guilt. On the one hand, he sees the arrest as something menacing and disturbing, as a threat to the calm of superficial existence; on the other, he finds himself involuntarily united with his accusers against himself. The power which the Court has over him thus stems less from any physical superiority or legal right, than from his own willingness, indeed eagerness, to submit himself to its judgement:

> Sie können einwenden, daß es ja überhaupt kein Verfahren ist, Sie haben sehr recht, denn es ist ja nur ein Verfahren, wenn ich es als solches anerkenne. Aber ich erkenne es also für den Augenblick jetzt an, aus Mitleid gewissermaßen. (Josef K.) (81)

> Das Gericht will nichts von dir. Es nimmt dich auf, wenn du kommst, und es entläßt dich, wenn du gehst. (The priest.) (82)

Such statements have, in fact, no place in the novel. They refer to Kafka's situation and not to K.'s, and are in direct contradiction to the narrative, since Josef K. <u>is</u> arrested and told to appear before the Court, <u>whether he wants to or not</u>. The novel loses its coherence, because the

simple pattern of opposition between Josef K. and the Court is distorted by Kafka's self-condemnation. Josef K.'s position with regard to the Court therefore becomes increasingly nebulous, until, in the final chapter, he not only finds himself in complete harmony with his executioners, but considers doing their work for them:

> Sie bildeten jetzt alle drei eine solche Einheit, daß, wenn man einen von ihnen zerschlagen hätte, alle zerschlagen gewesen wären. Es war eine Einheit, wie fast nur Lebloses bilden kann. K. wußte jetzt genau, daß es seine Pflicht gewesen wäre, das Messer, als es von Hand zu Hand über ihm schwebte, selbst zu fassen und sich einzubohren. (83)

Here, as elsewhere, K. holds himself responsible for the actions of the Court, an attitude which produces the paradox: "Es geschah durch fremde Leute gegen meinen Willen und doch, wie gesagt, durch meine Schuld."(84)

This is again a psychoanalytical observation upon Kafka's <u>own</u> neurosis, and has therefore no place in the novel. The schizoid person acts "against his will" and yet "the fault is his". In the case of irresolvable conflict, the aggressive impulse (i.e. the impulse which the person hopes to overcome) is repressed and, to all intents and purposes, forgotten. The inevitability of its reappearance has already been discussed in Chapter III. During the period of repression, the aggressive impulse may not only become autonomous, but change so drastically that, upon reappearance, it will seem foreign and external. Freud writes:

> Man könnte einen Widerspruch gegen manche unserer Voraussetzungen darin finden, daß die unliebsame Zwangs= vorstellung überhaupt bewußt wird. Allein es ist kein

> Zweifel, daß sie vorher den Prozeß der Verdrängung durchgemacht hat. In den meisten Fällen ist der eigentliche Wortlaut der aggressiven Triebregung dem Ich überhaupt nicht bekannt. Was zum Bewußtsein durchdringt, ist in der Regel nur ein entstellter Ersatz, entweder von einer verschwommenen, traumhaften Unbestimmtheit, oder unkenntlich gemacht durch eine absurde Verkleidung. (85)

"von einer verschwommenen, traumhaften Unbestimmtheit, ... unkenntlich gemacht durch eine absurde Verkleidung" - a description equally applicable to Kafka's beetle or to his Court. The Court is a travesty of K.'s conscience on the issue of marriage.

Where the aggressive impulse is regarded as morally desirable, the aim of repression is the avoidance not only of conflict but of a disturbing sense of guilt. During the period of repression the person lives in a state of relative emotional calm. The reappearance of his sense of guilt is therefore doubly unpleasant. This is the initial situation in "Der Prozeß". Josef K. is forced to struggle against an organisation which he can never hope to defeat for as Freud states, the ego cannot escape from itself.(86) K.'s struggle is therefore hopeless, yet he must continue it, in order to preserve his mental stability:

> Die Abweisung der Vorstellung vom Bewußten wird aber hartnäckig festgehalten, weil mit ihr die Abhaltung von der Aktion, die motorische Fesselung des Impulses, gegeben ist. So läuft die Verdrängungsarbeit der Zwangsneurose in ein erfolgloses und unabschließbares Ringen aus. (87)

The "erfolgloses und unabschließbares Ringen" was initially

Kafka's own. It was a struggle within the self, between desire and duty. In writing "Der Prozeß", Kafka externalised his consciousness of the duty, but incompletely, for the Court still appeared as a part of K. himself. This was an aid to the psycho-analyst but a cause of perplexity to the reader and often to the critic. There is much in "Der Prozeß" that simply will not make sense. A mysterious bond exists between accuser and accused; they have a knowledge of one another's activities that borders on the extrasensory: although he has been told neither the time nor the place of meeting, Josef K. is concerned that he may arrive late in court. On arrival, he is recognised without giving his name, and told to enter by a woman whom he has never met before. On the day of his execution he is already dressed and waiting when his warders arrive, although he has received no indication that a verdict has been reached. "Unsere Behörde", says the warder, Franz, "sucht doch nicht etwa die Schuld in der Bevölkerung, sondern wird, wie es im Gesetz heißt, von der Schuld angezogen und muß uns Wächter ausschicken. Das ist Gesetz."(88)

It is "the law" that conscience cannot be indefinitely suppressed - a "law" in psychology. Like "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung", "Der Prozeß" had thus a therapeutic value for Kafka. It was a work of atonement and of literary masochism. In the chapter entitled "Der Prügler", the warders, Franz and Wilhelm, agents of K.'s conscience, are cruelly beaten because of a complaint which he has lodged against them. The reason for this beating is flimsy enough; it is merely important that these men are punished and that it is K.'s fault:

> Wir werden nur gestraft, weil du uns angezeigt hast. Sonst wäre uns nichts geschehen, selbst wenn man erfahren hätte, was wir getan haben. (89)

The chapter is pure psychological theory, unintelligible within the context of the novel. K. discovers the beating when he is drawn by curiosity to enter a lumber-room in the bank. This dark, forgotten, little room, a repository for unwanted and rejected articles, is Kafka's symbol for the subconscious mind.(90) K., who has never previously entered this room, is startled to hear convulsive sighs coming from it. Inside he finds the two warders and a third man, "der eine Rute in der Hand hielt, um sie zu prügeln."(91) K.'s responsibility for the punishment is beyond doubt. Neither argument nor bribery, both of which he attempts, can remove the reality of his guilt:

> Da erhob sich der Schrei, den Franz ausstieß, ungeteilt und unveränderlich, er schien nicht von einem Menschen, sondern von einem gemarterten Instrument zu stammen, der ganze Korridor tönte von ihm, das ganze Haus mußte es hören. (92)

Unable to bear the spectacle of his own guilt, K. flies from the room. Throughout the next day he attempts to allay his sense of responsibility for the sufferings of the warders. Incapable of sacrificing himself, he pretends that such a sacrifice would have been unacceptable:

> Diese Aufopferung konnte wirklich niemand von K. verlangen. Wenn er das zu tun beabsichtigt hätte, so wäre es ja fast einfacher gewesen. K. hätte sich selbst ausgezogen und dem Prügler als Ersatz für die Wächter angeboten. Übrigens hätte der Prügler diese Vertretung gewiß nicht angenommen. (93)

The obsessive guilt neurosis recurs in various forms throughout Kafka's writing. Through his heroes' eyes Kafka peers repeatedly into his

own soul, like a child seeking reassurance that there is no bogey-man in the cupboard. The bogey-man is a creature of the child's nightmare; in the reality of day-light he finds reassurance. For Kafka there is no such simple solution: if the door is opened the bogey-man appears; if it remains closed, anxiety persists:

> Auch noch am nächsten Tage kamen K. die Wächter nicht aus dem Sinn. Als er auf dem Nachhausewege wieder an der Rumpel= kammer vorbeikam, öffnete er sie wie aus Gewohnheit. Vor dem, was er statt des erwarteten Dunkels erblickte, wußte er sich nicht zu fassen. Alles war unverändert, so wie er es am Abend vorher beim Öffnen der Tür gefunden hatte. Die Druck= sorten und Tintenflaschen gleich hinter der Schwelle, der Prügler mit der Rute, die noch vollständig ausgezogenen Wächter, die Kerze auf dem Regal, und die Wächter begannen zu klagen und riefen: "Herr!" Sofort warf K. die Tür zu und schlug noch mit den Fäusten gegen sie, als sei sie dann fester verschlossen. Fast weinend lief er zu den Dienern. "Räumt doch endlich die Rumpelkammer aus!" rief er. "Wir versinken ja im Schmutz!" (94)

To "clear out the dirt" of guilt, K. turns next to the Advocate, Huld. Huld is Kafka's gift to speculative criticism, a fund of paradox, exemplifying and contradicting in his utterances every possible theory. It seems as senseless conscientiously to follow his argument as it is to attempt to unravel the "Exegese der Legende", for neither appears to have any inherent meaning. They are documents illustrating the futility of hair-splitting and inconclusive argument. Huld's own statements can therefore contribute little to an understanding of his rôle in the novel.

Huld represents those intellectual processes by which the individual defends himself against attack, both from within and without. He is an "advocate", in the true legal sense of the word, only in so far as he concerns himself not with the actual guilt or innocence of his client, but takes from his shoulders the burden of defence, the task not of proving him innocent, but of avoiding a conviction. There the similarity with normal advocacy ends. Huld's statements about himself and the Court, his prevarication and casuistry cannot reasonably be explained as either satire or caricature. In the seventh and eighth chapters, the narrative totally loses its coherence; the critic finds himself again, however unwillingly, in the realms of psychoanalytic theory.

It was a fundamental tenet of Freudian psychotherapy that the power of the obsessional neurosis over the individual lay in its inaccessibility both to himself and to the therapist. Fixations such as guilt were, in a sense, trapped within the subconscious. Treatment therefore consisted in releasing the fixation and presenting it to the conscious mind as something irrational and therefore invalid. Kafka was profoundly sceptical about this theory. Guilt was not a disease, nor was it irrational. The demands which conscience made upon the person were fully justified. Intellect was powerless against these demands, not merely because they were hidden within the depths of the subconscious, but because the arguments which it produced in defence of the ego, were spurious and dishonest. Between conscience and intellect, as between the true and the false, there existed a state of aggressive non-recognition. In the case of guilt, psychotherapy therefore represented a dishonest and unsuccessful attempt to

avoid one's moral obligations. There was in fact no disease; consequently there could be no cure:

> Such es zu verstehn, indem du es Krankheit nennst. Es ist eine der vielen Krankheitserscheinungen, welche die Psychoanalyse aufgedeckt zu haben glaubt. Ich nenne es nicht Krankheit und sehe in dem therapeutischen Teil der Psychoanalyse einen hilflosen Irrtum. (95)

In the figure of Huld, Kafka thus seems to have given form both to his scepticism about the value of psychotherapy and to his more general belief that intellect was powerless against conscience. Huld's interviews with K. gradually take the form of tedious and barely disguised treatises on the psychoanalytic method. Throughout these interviews he stresses the difficulty which the advocate experiences in gaining access to the legal records and charge-sheets in his client's case, a difficulty brought about by the deliberate remoteness of the Court-officials and by their stubborn refusal to recognise the advocates at all. The remoteness and inaccessibility of the fixation to both patient and doctor was, as Kafka was aware, the analyst's greatest problem:

> Das Verfahren ist nämlich im allgemeinen nicht nur vor der Öffentlichkeit geheim, sondern auch vor dem Angeklagten. Infolgedessen sind auch die Schriften des Gerichts, vor allem die Anklageschrift, dem Angeklagten und seiner Verteidigung unzugänglich, man weiß daher im allgemeinen nicht oder wenigstens nicht genau, wogegen sich die erste Eingabe zu richten hat, sie kann daher eigentlich nur zufälligerweise etwas enthalten, was für die Sache von Bedeutung ist. Unter diesen Verhältnissen ist natürlich die Verteidigung in einer sehr ungünstigen und

> schwierigen Lage. Aber auch das ist beabsichtigt. Die Verteidigung ist nämlich durch das Gesetz nicht eigentlich gestattet, sondern nur geduldet. Es gibt daher strenggenommen gar keine vom Gericht anerkannten Advokaten. Man will die Verteidigung möglichst ausschalten, alles soll auf den Angeklagten selbst gestellt sein. (96)

In 1914 psychoanalysis was, of course, very much in its infancy. Freud himself expressed doubts about the success of therapeutic methods based upon his own findings. Nor were Kafka's criticisms entirely objective: the sense of guilt, which for him had been a lifelong reality, could not easily be dismissed as an illusion. Kafka was prone to hypochondria and spiritual masochism, and resented the "easy way out" which psychotherapy had to offer.

Between 1895 and 1899 Freud produced his most famous work, "Die Traumdeutung": the dream was the key to the subconscious. Uninhibited and entirely honest, it gave the analyst a unique opportunity of delving into the deepest recesses of personality. This was the theory. In effect, this method of analysis proved so unreliable that it was eventually abandoned. Firstly, the patient was generally able to remember only a small fraction of what he had dreamt; secondly, the information had to pass through the conscious mind of the patient, who invariably found it confused; thirdly, the anxieties and wishes expressed in dreams were not uninhibited and honest but restricted and distorted by the activity of the censor. The analyst was therefore forced to deal with the confused, inaccurate, incomplete and half-forgotten material passed on to him by the patient:

> Bei den Verhören dürfen im allgemeinen Verteidiger nicht anwesend sein, sie müssen daher nach den Verhören, und zwar möglichst noch an der Tür des Untersuchungszimmers, den Angeklagten über das Verhör ausforschen und diesen oft schon sehr verwischten Berichten das für die Verteidigung Taugliche entnehmen. Aber das Wichtigste ist dies nicht, denn viel kann man auf diese Weise nicht erfahren, wenn natürlich auch hier wie überall ein tüchtiger Mann mehr erfährt als andere. (97)

However close the analogy between Huld and the psychoanalyst may be, it would be wrong to claim that Kafka had set out deliberately to parody the theories and methods of the Freudian school. That would have required a degree of objectivity of which he was certainly incapable and would be entirely out of keeping with his approach to literature. Huld represents nothing so specific as a psychoanalyst, but demonstrates the futility of trying to solve emotional problems by intellectual methods. If Huld is a satirical figure at all, the satire is not upon psychoanalysis but upon Kafka the indeterminate thinker, the obsessive theorist, the man incapable of either decision or action. During the five years of his engagement Kafka successfully kept the issue of marriage in the balance. The long lists of the pros and cons of marriage which appear in the diaries were never intended to produce conclusions but were Kafka's defence <u>against</u> the conclusion that he was incapable of marrying at all. If he could not overcome his incapacity, and the sense of guilt which accompanied it, he could at least postpone the final judgement upon himself by perpetuating a mental struggle, whose outcome had been determined from the beginning:

> Nur keine Aufmerksamkeit erregen! Sich ruhig verhalten, selbst wenn es einem noch so sehr gegen den Sinn geht!

> Einzusehen versuchen, daß dieser große Gerichtsorganismus gewissermaßen ewig in der Schwebe bleibt und daß man zwar, wenn man auf seinem Platz selbstständig etwas ändert, den Boden unter den Füßen sich wegnimmt und selbst abstürzen kann. (98)

This is intended as a warning to K. against taking independent action in his case. But K.'s impatience with the contradictory statements of the Advocate reaches a point at which he is no longer able to bear the anxiety of indecision. The slavish devotion to Huld of the commercial traveller, Block,[99] convinces K. that his defence is not in good hands and he takes the unprecedented step of dismissing the Advocate. Thus K. falls to destruction by disturbing "the delicate balance" of indecision. The dismissal of the Advocate is a sign to the Court that K. is prepared to abandon his intellectual defences and to take independent and positive action. It is a brave decision, but a fatal one, for K. is totally incapable of action. The weight of guilt now lies squarely upon his own shoulders and he is defenceless against it. Gradually he comes to realise the gravity of his position, for if the Advocate's mediation had not brought his case to a satisfactory conclusion, it had at least postponed the final and inevitable verdict of the Court:

> Der Entschluß, seine Verteidigung selbst in die Hand zu nehmen, stellte sich ihm schwerwiegender dar, als er ursprünglich angenommen hatte. Solange er die Verteidigung auf den Advokaten überwälzt hatte, war er doch noch vom Prozeß im Grunde wenig betroffen gewesen, er hatte ihn von der Ferne beobachtet und hatte unmittelbar von ihm kaum erreicht werden können, er hatte nachsehen können, wann [sic] er wollte, wie seine Sache stand, aber er hatte auch den Kopf wieder zurückziehen können,

> wann er wollte. Jetzt hingegen, wenn er seine Verteidigung selbst führen würde, mußte er sich ganz und gar dem Gericht aussetzen, der Erfolg dessen sollte ja für später vollständige und endgültige Befreiung sein, aber um diese zu erreichen, mußte er sich vorläufig jedenfalls in viel größere Gefahr begeben als bisher. (100)

With the Advocate's dismissal, direct contact between Josef K. and the Court is possible once more. Through the Court-Chaplain, the hero of "Der Prozeß" receives a final warning against putting his faith in outside help:

> Du suchst zuviel fremde Hilfe und besonders bei Frauen. Merkst du denn nicht, daß es nicht die wahre Hilfe ist? (101)

But K. proves incorrigible. Minutes after this warning, he considers seeking the aid of the Priest himself, his counsel, "nicht etwa wie der Prozeß zu beeinflussen war, sondern wie man aus dem Prozeß ausbrechen, wie man ihn umgehen, wie man außerhalb des Prozesses leben könnte."(102) Thus K.'s mental attitude has not changed at all since the day of his arrest. He has learnt nothing from his trial. On the eve of his thirty-first birthday, K. is taken to his execution. Suddenly, and for the second and last time in the novel, Fräulein Bürstner appears. At almost the very instant of death, K. is given some indication of the nature of his crime. Kafka's hero does not die entirely without enlightenment: from Fräulein Bürstner he learns the negative lesson of the futility of resistance:

> Es war nicht ganz sicher, ob sie es war, die Ähnlichkeit war freilich groß. Aber K. lag auch nichts daran, ob es bestimmt Fräulein Bürstner war, bloß die Wertlosigkeit seines Widerstandes kam ihm gleich zum Bewußtsein. (103)

In 1917, Kafka finally broke off his engagement to F.B. He too had learnt to accept the "futility of resistance":

> Einige Tage nachher kehrte er nach Zürau zurück. Er hatte mir noch einen sehr unglücklichen Brief von F. gezeigt. Seine Stellung ihr gegenüber war aber ganz fest, er hatte nicht nur auf sie, sondern auf jede Möglichkeit eines Eheglücks verzichtet. Der Schmerz, den er sich selbst zufügte, gab ihm die Kraft, auch anderen gegenüber die natürliche Weich= heit seines Herzens zu bezwingen und nicht nachzugeben, wo er einmal die Unumgänglichkeit des bitteren Entschlusses erkannt hatte. (104)

In treating "Der Prozeß" as, in part at least, a case-history of neurosis, the critic avoids the thorny problem of personal allegiance. The Kafka hero deserves the same sympathy as is due to every other sufferer, physical or mental, but the question of moral or aesthetic justification is best left to those existentialist critics who, with no textual evidence whatsoever, regard Josef K. and the Court as reincarnations of Tasso and Antonio. The comparison is admissible only in so far as it refers indirectly to Franz and Hermann Kafka:

> Zwei Männer sind's, ich hab' es lang' gefühlt,
> Die darum Feinde sind, weil die Natur
> Nicht einen Mann aus ihnen beiden formte. (105)

Kafka's capacity for accepting and assimilating the reproaches and criticisms levelled at him by others, and particularly by his father, was boundless. Long after the actual source of criticism had been forgotten, consciousness of guilt remained. In dealing with Kafka's marriage-dilemma, it is therefore difficult to avoid speaking of "guilt", as if it were something unrelated to reality, of "abstract guilt" or "guilt in vacuo", terms which have little or no meaning beyond the realms of psychoanalysis and the obsessive neurosis. Guilt may, of course, be real or imagined, but even in the latter case it must have a source. Kafka's inability to marry has already been described in this chapter as "pathological", as the result of an emotional rather than a physical incapacity, but it is safe to say that this condition was aggravated, if not provoked, by Franz's father and by the lack of real understanding within the Kafka family:

Josef K. does not live with his family, but in a boarding-house. This in itself is significant for Kafka regarded himself not as a member of the family but as a stranger:

> "Also keiner versteht dich", sagte die Mutter, "ich bin dir wahrscheinlich auch fremd und der Vater auch. Wir alle wollen also nur dein Schlechtes." "Gewiß, ihr seid mir alle fremd, nur die Blutnähe besteht, aber sie äußert sich nicht. Mein Schlechtes wollt ihr gewiß nicht." (106)

It would be refreshing if some of the "Kafka-sympathy" that is so liberally distributed by the existentialist critics, were to be redirected from the "tortured soul" to the infinitely more noble figure of his mother.

In the "Brief an den Vater" Kafka describes his mother as an intermediary between father and son. It was, as he admits, an unenviable position:

> Rücksichtslos haben wir auf sie eingehämmert, Du von Deiner Seite, wir von unserer. Es war eine Ablenkung, man dachte an nichts Böses, man dachte nur an den Kampf, den Du mit uns, den wir mit Dir führten, und auf der Mutter tobten wir uns aus. Natürlich hätte die Mutter das alles nicht ertragen können, wenn sie nicht aus der Liebe zu uns allen und aus dem Glück dieser Liebe die Kraft zum Ertragen genommen hätte. (107)

The relationship between Josef K. and his landlady, Frau Grubach, follows a very similar pattern. K. describes himself as "ihr bester und liebster Mieter", but Frau Grubach shows an interest in the bank official that can only be described as "embarrassingly maternal":

> Es handelt sich ja um Ihr Glück und das liegt mir wirklich am Herzen, mehr als mir vielleicht zusteht, denn ich bin ja bloß die Vermieterin. (108)

K. replies to this display of maternal affection by at one moment taking the landlady into his confidence, seeking her judgement as "eine vernünftige Frau" and, at the next, venting on her the rage and frustration engendered by his sudden arrest. At times his treatment verges on the sadistic. He taunts her with threats of giving notice, browbeats her with his intellectual superiority and plunges her into a state of intolerable anxiety by sudden and unjustified verbal attacks and periods of sullen and aggressive silence. No ordinary landlady would attempt to withstand such treatment; but Frau Grubach is more than a landlady: she is a mother to

her boarders and suffers willingly and without reproach:

> "Sie wissen gar nicht, wie ich die letzten Tage gelitten habe! Ich sollte meine Mieter verleumden! Und Sie, Herr K., glaubten es! Und sagten, ich solle Ihnen kündigen! Ihnen kündigen!" Der letzte Ausruf erstickte schon unter Tränen, sie hob die Schürze zum Gesicht und schluchzte laut. "Weinen Sie doch nicht, Frau Grubach", sagte K. (109)

In her attitude to the arrest Frau Grubach also betrays the naïvely maternal philosophy that for her "son" among all men, everything must eventually turn out well. K.'s execution demonstrates conclusively the seriousness of this misconception. Similar optimism on the part of Julie Kafka may well have had greater justification, for her son had at least the opportunity, not open to Josef K., of letting his heroes perish in his place:

> Heute sprach ich beim Frühstück mit der Mutter zufällig über Kinder und Heiraten, nur ein paar Worte, aber ich bemerkte dabei zum erstenmal deutlich, wie unwahr und kindlich die Vorstellung ist, die sich meine Mutter von mir macht. Sie hält mich für einen gesunden jungen Mann, der ein wenig an der Einbildung leidet, krank zu sein. Diese Einbildung wird mit der Zeit von selbst schwinden, eine Heirat allerdings und Kinderzeugung würden sie am gründlichsten beseitigen. Lösungs=möglichkeiten gibt es tausende. Die wahrscheinlichste ist, daß ich mich plötzlich in ein Mädchen verliebe und von ihr nicht mehr werde ablassen wollen. (110)

Three other people live in Frau Grubach's boarding-house. They are Captain Lanz (the landlady's nephew), Fräulein Montag and Fräulein

Bürstner. Captain Lanz is a minor figure and plays no significant rôle in the novel. The suggestion that he represents Kafka's father is completely without foundation. Fräulein Montag,(111) who appears in the chapter, "Die Freundin des Fräulein Bürstner", is the intermediary between K. and the typist. It is her unpleasant[?] duty to bring to Kafka's hero the news that Fräulein Bürstner is not interested in his "immature" advances. The intermediary between Kafka and F.B. was a certain "Bl." Between January and October 1914, several references appear in the diaries to a prolonged correspondence between Kafka and this young woman. Brod refers to her rôle in the relationship as "nicht ganz durchsichtig", but later mentions "ein Brief der Freundin von F., die zu vermitteln sucht." It is not quite clear whether this mediation, which occurred at the most critical moments in Kafka's relationship with F.B., was intended to bring about a reconciliation or to announce the bitter but inevitable end of his engagement. Whichever is the case, Grete Bl. was Felice Bauer's friend and undertook at least to explain the fiancée's position. Of her presence at the engagement in Berlin ("Das Gerichtshof im Hotel"), Kafka wrote to her:

> Sie sind zwar im "Askanischen Hof" als Richterin über mir gesessen, es war abscheulich für Sie, für mich, für alle - aber es sah nur so aus, in Wirklichkeit bin ich auf Ihrem Platz gesessen und bin noch bis heute dort. Ihre Anteilnahme habe ich immer für wahr und gegen sich selbst rücksichtslos gehalten. Auch den letzten Brief zu schreiben, ist Ihnen nicht leicht geworden. Ich danke Ihnen dafür herzlich. (112)

Kafka thus denies having had any feeling of animosity towards Fräulein Bl. but, like Josef K., he may well have felt, "als sei irgendwie

allem das Fräulein beigemischt und mache es widerwärtig."(113)

The fourth member of the Grubach household is Fräulein Bürstner. Kafka thus suggests the possibility of her becoming a member of "the family". Frau Grubach's reaction to such a suggestion would clearly be unfavourable since, in her discussions with K., she indirectly casts doubt upon the typist's morals:

> Ich habe sie in diesem Monat schon zweimal in entlegenen Straßen und immer mit einem anderen Herrn gesehen. Es ist übrigens nicht das Einzige, das sie mir verdächtig macht. (114)

The mother warns her son of the dangers of being misled by the purely sexual attractions of an "undesirable" woman, but, in doing so, casts doubt upon the son's judgement and even upon his own moral stature. Similar doubts were expressed, in a less gentle way, by Hermann Kafka: Franz's motive for marrying was purely sexual. This was not, however, a moral criticism but an intellectual one. It was not wrong to marry for such reasons, merely foolish. There were ways of finding sexual gratification, without taking on the unnecessary burden of a wife and children:

> Sie hat wahrscheinlich irgendeine ausgesuchte Bluse angezogen, wie das die Prager Jüdinnen verstehn, und daraufhin hast Du Dich natürlich entschlossen, sie zu heiraten. Und zwar möglichst rasch, in einer Woche, morgen, heute. Ich begreife Dich nicht, Du bist doch ein erwachsener Mensch, bist in der Stadt, und weißt Dir keinen anderen Rat als gleich eine Beliebige zu heiraten. Gibt es da keine anderen Möglichkeiten? Wenn Du Dich davor fürchtest, werde ich selbst mit Dir hingehn.(115)

Kafka never forgot this cruel and unjustified admonition. In

"Das Urteil" the blouse appears as a symbol of Georg Bendemann's lust, in "Der Prozeß" as a motif that appears each time Josef K.'s sexual desire for Fräulein Bürstner is aroused.

More damning for Kafka than the accusation that his interest in Felice Bauer was purely sexual, was the suggestion that he was either so timid or so incapable as to need his father's help and support in the difficult business of becoming "a grown man": "Wenn Du Dich davor fürchtest, werde ich selbst mit Dir hingehn."(116) The initiation which Hermann Kafka here proposes for his already adult son, appears, heavily disguised, in chapter three of "Der Prozeß" ("Im leeren Sitzungssaal"). Exactly one week after his first interrogation, Josef K. returns to the Court-offices, expecting his hearing to be continued. He finds the offices deserted except for one woman, the wife of the Court-Attendant. K. now has the unique opportunity of looking through the tattered volumes of the Law, in which the Examining Magistrate had been so utterly engrossed during the previous interrogation. He is amazed by what he discovers:

> K. schlug das oberste Buch auf, es erschien ein unanständiges Bild. Ein Mann und eine Frau saßen nackt auf einem Kanapee, die gemeine Absicht des Zeichners war deutlich zu erkennen, aber seine Ungeschicklichkeit war so groß gewesen, daß schließlich doch nur ein Mann und eine Frau zu sehen waren, die allzu körperlich aus dem Bilde hervorragten, übermäßig aufrecht dasaßen und sich infolge falscher Perspektive nur mühsam einander zuwendeten. "Das sind die Gesetzbücher, die hier studiert werden", sagte K., "von solchen Menschen soll ich gerichtet werden." (117)

Of this last sentence, Slochower writes:

> But the point is, these <u>are</u> the men - the potent males - who must sit in judgement on men like Josef K.; they handle crimes of sexual maladjustment. (118)

But where is the evidence to suggest that Josef K. is either impotent or "sexually maladjusted"? Is this not the same Josef K. who, once a week, visited the waitress Elsa, who received her visitors in bed; is it not the same Josef K. who was accustomed to yield to every attraction? Josef K.'s "crime" is not that he is sexually maladjusted but that he is unmarried. These men are indeed, as Slochower suggests, "the potent males", but first and foremost they are Josef K.'s enemies because they are married and he is not. To Josef K. the books of the Law present an indecent picture because, through his emotional lack, he must deny the higher meaning which intercourse assumes within marriage - within the Law. In his introduction to "Seder Nashim" (The Talmud) Dr. I. Epstein states:

> The regulated sexual relations between husband and wife were raised to the dignity of a positive command. Thus it is the unmarried man who was said by them [the Rabbis] to live in unchastity - at least in the inescapable unchastity of thought, if not of action; whereas the married man alone could live in purity. (119)

As a married man, Hermann Kafka thus stood outside the sordid advice and assistance which he offered his son:

> Die Hauptsache war vielmehr, daß Du außerhalb Deines Rates bliebst, ein Ehemann, ein reiner Mann, erhaben über diese Dinge. Bestand die Welt also nur aus mir und Dir, eine Vorstellung, die mir sehr nahelag, dann endete also mit Dir diese Reinheit der Welt, und mit mir begann kraft Deines Rates der Schmutz. (120)

"Prozeß": "Wie schmutzig hier alles ist," sagte K. kopfschüttelnd, und die Frau wischte mit ihrer Schürze, ehe K. nach den Büchern greifen konnte, wenigstens oberflächlich den Staub weg. (121)

To the neurotic bachelor all married men must to some extent appear as father-figures. "The battle with the father in 'Amerika'", writes Neider, "has become the battle with the group father in 'Der Prozeß'."(122) In childhood this "battle" takes the form of an attempt to win from the father the mother's affection, an attempt that rarely succeeds but around which the child can build a phantasy of revenge and self-assertion:

> Und es gab vielleicht keine bessere Rache an dem Untersuchungsrichter und seinem Anhang, als daß er ihnen diese Frau entzog und an sich nahm. Es könnte sich dann einmal der Fall ereignen, daß der Untersuchungsrichter nach mühevoller Arbeit an Lügenberichten über K. in später Nacht das Bett der Frau leer fand. Und leer deshalb, weil sie K. gehörte, weil diese Frau am Fenster, dieser üppige, gelenkige, warme Körper im dunklen Kleid aus grobem, schwerem Stoff, durchaus nur K. gehörte. (123)

The woman in question is the Court-Attendant's wife, who brings K.'s phantasy to an abrupt conclusion by telling him that she does not want to be set free from the clutches of the Court and that it would be her ruin. K. thus abandons all thoughts of winning the woman over. It is his first unequivocal defeat, as is the child's first attempt to win over his mother. The Court-Attendant himself appears, distinguishable only by two gilt buttons, "sein einziges amtliches Abzeichen" and Kafka's symbol in

both "Die Verwandlung" and "Amerika" for the power and authority of the father. Driven by curiosity, K. accepts the man's offer to conduct him through the Court offices, the world of the fathers. There K. suffers his greatest humiliation. Abandoned by the Attendant, he becomes lost and confused, eventually collapsing in the oppressive and airless atmosphere of the Court attics. Weak and faint, he is helped into the street by a man and a girl, employees of the Court:

> "Also auf, Sie schwacher Mann", sagte der Auskunftgeber. K. schämte sich fast vor ihm, früher war er so aufrecht vor ihm gestanden, jetzt mußten ihn zwei stützen. (124)

Had Kafka accepted his father's offer to take him to one of the many Prague brothels, the result might well have been the same, not through any sexual incapacity on Kafka's part but because he was convinced of his own complete inability to match his father in power, virility or in those qualities which are the prerequisites of a successful marriage:

> So wie wir aber sind, ist mir das Heiraten dadurch verschlossen, daß es gerade Dein eigenstes Gebiet ist. Manchmal stelle ich mir die Erdkarte ausgespannt und Dich quer über sie hin ausgestreckt vor. Und es ist mir dann, als kämen für mein Leben nur die Gegenden in Betracht, die Du entweder nicht bedeckst oder die nicht in Deiner Reichweite liegen. Und das sind entsprechend der Vorstellung, die ich von Deiner Größe habe, nicht viele und nicht sehr trostreiche Gegenden und besonders die Ehe ist nicht darunter. (125)

Towards the end of his year of trial Josef K. turns to the artist Titorelli for help, only to discover, as Kafka had discovered, that art,

however deep its insight, is powerless to alter the human situation. K. leaves the studio, having agreed to buy three of the artist's heathscapes. These paintings represent Kafka's works: arid, desolate, repetitive. It is Kafka's own comment, if not the critic's. Into the mouth of the artist, the author of "Der Prozeß" finally puts these words:

> Es sind lauter Heidelandschaften, ich habe schon viele Heidelandschaften gemalt. Manche Leute weisen solche Bilder ab, weil sie zu düster sind, andere aber, und Sie gehören zu ihnen, lieben gerade das Düstere. (126)

Conclusion

"Der Prozeß" is the most tedious and obscure of Kafka's major works, but may be regarded as representative of his narrative technique in so far as it is almost totally devoid of action and describes not a series of events but the hero's mental attitude in the face of a personal crisis.

The novel is similar in form and in theme to "Die Verwandlung" and may be described as a protracted version of the earlier story. In neither work is the autobiographical element obtrusive, yet both are essentially subjective.

The autobiographical basis of "Der Prozeß" is the conflict between Kafka's natural inclination not to marry, his pathological fear of the permanent liaison, and his belief that to remain a bachelor was both undesirable and sinful. Kafka thus castigates himself in "Der Prozeß" for having failed in his personal, social and religious duty to marry, and depicts his hero as one suffering from a fundamental emotional lack and living a life that is planned and formalised, dominated by a routine that includes even his sexual relationships. In Josef K.'s execution he therefore demonstrates that it is impossible for him not to marry, while, in "Das Urteil", he had shown that it was impossible for him to marry.

In interpreting "Der Prozeß", it is not possible to identify the Court with any external authority, whether legal, bureaucratic, political or religious, nor to show that by Josef K.'s trial Kafka intended to depict either the destructive processes of a fatal disease or the course of his relationship with his father. An analogy may, however, be drawn between the Court and K.'s, or Kafka's conscience on the marriage issue, so that the Court must ultimately be seen as a part of K. himself. This analogy serves

to explain not only the Court's remoteness, its incoherence and power, but also the attraction that exists between it and Josef K., and his willingness to submit himself to its judgement.

In writing "Der Prozeß", Kafka has again utilised the Freudian theory of the "return of the repressed", although his scepticism concerning the value of psychotherapy is also apparent in the novel.

As in "Die Verwandlung" and "Amerika", the father plays a relatively minor rôle, while Fräulein Bürstner and Frau Grubach may be identified with Felice Bauer and Julie Kafka respectively.

Ultimately, the novel loses its coherence because the clear pattern of opposition between K. and the Court is obscured by Kafka's self-condemnation, because he failed to externalise his conscience on the marriage issue completely and thus allowed his hero to associate himself with the judgements of his accusers.

C H A P T E R VI

Kafka's Religious Development.

There is no more thorny question in Kafka criticism than that of his religious beliefs and how he expressed them in his writing, if at all. If, in the figure of Huld the Advocate,[1] Kafka had opened the door to the more speculative forms of criticism, in his virtual silence on religious matters he made it possible for every conceivable creed, from Catholicism[2] to Eastern Cenobitism,[3] to claim him for its own. Kafka seldom mentions God in his diaries but, paradoxically, this lack of evidence has merely served to increase the output of the theologians whose dictum, "There is no position so extreme that it cannot be defended", has until now proved correct. However, the fault is by no means restricted to theology, for lack of specific information about Kafka's own beliefs led theologians and psychologists alike away from the author himself, from literary criticism, to the greener pastures of philosophy, of personal belief and, most markedly, of dogma. The question was no longer: "What did Kafka believe and how successful was he in expressing his beliefs?" but: "What should, and therefore must Kafka have believed and how successful was he in expressing that in his writing?" In thus heavyhandedly censuring the theologians for being blind to the documented facts, the psychologists committed the same error in a different form. The Kantian a priori was replaced by the Freudian a priori, that God's non-existence was manifest, that Kafka could not therefore have written about him and that, consciously or unconsciously, he had treated the father-son relationship in every work.

The "father or God" question is central in the battle between theology and psychology and when related specifically to Kafka, resembles the problem of the chicken and the egg: "'The Trial', 'The Castle' and 'In the

Penal Colony'", writes Frederick J. Hoffman, "treat of the father-position transformed into the image of an inaccessible and incomprehensible God, the whimsical God of the Book of Job, or the stern and demanding God of Kierkegaard's 'Fear and Trembling'."(4) In reply, Nathan A. Scott Jr. writes: "It is more probably true than the psychoanalytic interpreters are willing to admit that Kafka's religious experience was not simply a mythical projection of his personal [i.e. father] problem and that he did not involuntarily draw his God upon the scale of his father-image, but instead, constructed the father-image in accordance with a deeper religious disturbance in which he encountered a deity whose visage was terrible and awful to look upon."(5)

God's existence or non-existence is not the question in our present study. Similarly, any discussion as to whether Kafka's god was modelled on his father, or his father on God, is likely to reveal only the preconceived notions of the critic. In theory, Hoffman and Scott hold diametrically opposed points of view; yet both state that Kafka's conception of his father and his conception of God are remarkably similar. Both admit some form of religious belief in Kafka, but while Hoffman, in the Freudian tradition, suggests that Kafka's conception of God was unconsciously or involuntarily based upon his relationship with his father, Scott emphasises the independent nature of his belief. Although the psychological is as a rule supposed to tally with the empirical or biographical approach, Scott is almost certainly nearer the truth. There is a danger in psychological interpretation of accentuating the cause and neglecting the effect, of placing undue emphasis upon phenomena which, while clearly present in the author's early life and

work, have become so transformed in later years as to be unrecognisable without tortuous manipulation of the facts and which, in view of this transformation, must be treated as new and independent phenomena, as causes themselves. Thus, in "Das Urteil", "Die Verwandlung" and to some extent in "Amerika", the father is directly present and can be recognised without undue difficulty; yet even in these early works the sense of guilt or bad conscience of the hero has assumed a certain autonomy. In neither "Das Urteil" nor "Die Verwandlung" is the hero actually murdered; both Bendemann and Samsa choose to accept the verdict passed upon them and are driven to commit suicide not by their fathers but by their consciences. The case is clearer in "Der Prozeß": what is central in the novel is Josef K.'s bad conscience on the issue of marriage. The psychoanalytic interpreters rightly argue that Kafka's sense of guilt in this matter had its roots, partially at least, in his relationship with his father, in his failure, or rather his inability to equal the father's achievement; but to suggest further that "Der Prozeß" is a novel about Hermann Kafka[6] is absurd. Critics who are so obsessed with the search for sources must ultimately see the first cause - be it religious or scientific - as the sole actual theme of all human thought and literature. To understand the works of Kafka fully, it is necessary to go beyond the "first cause", the father, and to regard the author's adult personality as an autonomous and effective force, however negative or destructive. To establish the exact nature of this force and its relationship to Kafka's religious beliefs is the next step:

Kafka's relationship with his father has already been fully described in Chapter I, but it is perhaps wise to recall the author's own summing-up of the results of that relationship upon his personality:

> Dadurch wurde die Welt für mich in drei Teile geteilt, in einen, wo ich, der Sklave, lebte, unter Gesetzen, die nur für mich erfunden waren und denen ich überdies, ich wußte nicht warum, niemals völlig entsprechen konnte, dann in eine zweite Welt, die unendlich von meiner entfernt war, in der Du lebtest, beschäftigt mit der Regierung, mit dem Ausgeben der Befehle und mit dem Ärger wegen deren Nichtbefolgung, und schließlich in eine dritte Welt, wo die übrigen Leute glücklich und frei von Befehlen und Gehorchen lebten. Ich war immerfort in Schande, entweder befolgte ich Deine Befehle, das war Schande, denn sie galten ja nur für mich; oder ich war trotzig, das war auch Schande, denn wie durfte ich Dir gegenüber trotzig sein, oder ich konnte nicht folgen, weil ich zum Beispiel nicht Deine Kraft, nicht Deinen Appetit, nicht Deine Geschicklichkeit hatte, trotzdem Du es als etwas Selbstverständliches von mir verlangtest; das war allerdings die größte Schande. (7)

The violent reaction which one might expect from a normal, self-willed child, the healthy sense of aggression is totally absent in Kafka. He accepts "den Fluch des Vaters"(8) eagerly and sets out on the lifelong quest for confirmation of his guilt, for proof that he is "ein solches Nichts".(9) The conscious, premeditated nature of Kafka's self-destruction is rarely taken into account by his biographers with the result that undue stress is laid upon the rôle of the father at a point (after 1912) when Kafka had already taken upon himself the task which, he claimed, his father had begun:

> Falls ich in nächster Zeit sterben oder gänzlich lebens=unfähig werden sollte - diese Möglichkeit ist groß, da ich in den letzten zwei Nächten starken Bluthusten hatte - so darf ich sagen, daß ich mich selbst zerrissen habe. Wenn mein Vater

früher in wilden, aber leeren Drohungen zu sagen pflegte: Ich zerreiße dich wie einen Fisch - tatsächlich berührte er mich nicht mit einem Finger - , so verwirklicht sich jetzt die Drohung von ihm unabhängig. Die Welt - F. ist ihr Repräsentant - und mein Ich zerreißen in unlösbarem Wider= streit meinen Körper. (10)

Die systematische Zerstörung meiner selbst im Laufe der Jahre ist erstaunlich, es war wie ein langsam sich entwickelnder Dammbruch, eine Aktion voll Absicht. (11)

This spiritual masochism which takes the form of a deliberate accumulation of feelings of guilt, of an obsessive preoccupation with bad conscience, is Kafka's forte. And yet there is nothing in Kafka's biography, as there is nothing in the lives of his heroes, that could reasonably be described as sinful, immoral or even anti-social. No single execution or suicide in Kafka's work can be considered as humanly or ethically justifiable; each represents a judgement passed upon the self by a human being, oversensitive to personal guilt to the point of disease: Georg Bendemann commits suicide because he has neglected his true interests - in Kafka's case: literature - in order to marry; his bad conscience, here in the form of his father, condemns him; Gregor Samsa dies voluntarily - a fine distinction from committing suicide - because he too has neglected his true interests in order to support his parasitic family; his bad conscience, in the form of a beetle, condemns him. In "Amerika", in which the paradox of moral innocence combined with technical guilt is most clearly expressed, Karl Rossmann is expelled from his European home and hounded through a foreign land because a servant-girl has seduced him. Finally there is the

case of Josef K., who is annihilated after a year of persecution: because he is a bachelor; his bad conscience, in the form of a vast, judicial hierarchy, condemns him. These works thus fulfilled for Kafka a punitive function which would have been denied and abhorred by all accepted canons, secular or religious. Brod rightly describes "Der Prozeß" and "In der Strafkolonie" as "Dokumente dichterischer Selbstbestrafung, imaginierte Sühnehandlungen",(12) but is careful throughout his biography to dismiss any serious suggestion of mental illness. Kafka was not a lunatic but, in theory if not in practice, his masochism went beyond spiritual self-torment to a more concrete and perhaps more horrifying obsession with physical pain; the diaries and notebooks are full of entries like the following:

> Durch das Parterrefenster eines Hauses an einem um den Hals gelegten Strick hineingezogen und ohne Rücksicht, wie von einem, der nicht acht gibt, blutend und zerfetzt durch alle Zimmerdecken, Möbel, Mauern und Dachböden hinaufgerissen werden, bis oben auf dem Dach die leere Schlinge erscheint, die auch meine Reste erst beim Durchbrechen der Dachziegel verloren hat. (13)

> Heute früh zum erstenmal seit langer Zeit wieder die Freude an der Vorstellung eines in meinem Herzen gedrehten Messers. (14)

> Die ergiebigste Stelle zum Hineinstechen scheint zwischen Hals und Kinn zu sein. Man hebe das Kinn und stecke das Messer in die gestrafften Muskeln. Die Stelle ist aber wahrscheinlich nur in der Vorstellung ergiebig. Man erwartet dort ein groß= artiges Ausströmen des Blutes zu sehn und ein Flechtwerk von Sehnen und Knöchelchen zu zerreißen, wie man es ähnlich in den gebratenen Schenkeln von Truthähnen findet. (15)

> Einmal brach ich mir das Bein, es war das schönste Erlebnis meines Lebens. (16)

In this opening section, we have tried to avoid interpreting the whole of Kafka's work in terms of a single source, the father, and have attempted instead to discover the dominant and effective force in Kafka's personality. This force takes the form of spiritual and even physical masochism. In approaching the actual history of Kafka's religious development, we may therefore expect a natural predisposition towards the more oppressive, rigorous and demanding theologies.

Nowhere in Kafka's autobiographical writings can there be found any clear statement of his religious convictions. In spite of the testimony of Max Brod, it seems likely that Kafka's interest in theology was limited to those areas of doctrine which coincided with or had some bearing upon his personal situation. Brod's biography is least reliable on this aspect of Kafka's thought for, though he cannot be accused of conscious distortion, it is clear that his desire to portray Kafka as religious author, Zionist and saint, as a man after his own heart, far outweighed his sense of biographic objectivity. Brod's mission - and he must be regarded as the first and most loyal Kafka-"disciple" - is to refute the thesis that Kafka's works embody the depths of nihilism and to demonstrate, by reference to a few optimistic passages in Kafka's diaries and notebooks, that a ray of hope shines, however dimly, through the darkness of unbelief, doubt and fear:

> In Kafkas Werk findet sich viel Skeptisches, das an den Grundlagen des Glaubens rüttelt. Dennoch ist er kein Dichter des Unglaubens und der Verzweiflung. Er ist vielmehr ein Dichter der Prüfung des Glaubens, der Prüfung im Glauben.
>
> Daher keiner von jenen, bei denen sich der Zweifel zur starren Grimasse der Gottesleugnung verhärtet hat. Vielmehr muß man ihn jenen zurechnen, die unter unsäglichen Mühen den Glauben suchen, die mitten in der Verzweiflung unserer liebeleeren Zeit die schmale Flamme der Hoffnung sorgsam hegen, sie immer wieder verlöschen sehen und denen dennoch zuweilen, in gnadenhaften Augenblicken, in Perioden der Erhebung ein Ahnen der Erlösung geschenkt wird. (17)

Similarly in the Biography:

> Die drei Zitate aus Kafkas Tagebüchern, die ich meiner Monographie vorangestellt habe, sprechen eine deutliche Sprache. Ich bitte, sie nochmals zu lesen, ehe man die Lektüre hier fortsetzt. Ohne diese Leitsätze kann man, wie ich glaube, Kafkas religiöse Haltung niemals verstehen. Das Hoffnungsvolle, das in solchen und ähnlichen Sätzen Kafkas liegt, darf nicht wegeskamotiert werden. (18)

Brod's overanxiousness, his determination to convince the reader at whatever cost, explains in part his complete lack of perspective in this matter; three quotations,[19] reflections of the mood of a particular day when, perhaps, Kafkas headaches were not unduly oppressive, quotations with no single reference to a religious outlook of any sort, are brought forward as irrefutable evidence of a positive and ultimately victorious faith in God.

Chapter V of Brod's Biography is entitled "Religiöse Entwicklung", but the reader who expects even the most general summary of the changes and

developments in Kafka's religious thought will be disappointed; Brod reserves this chapter for a tiresome reiteration of his personal beliefs about Kafka and abandons the biographical completely. It is clear that his biography and other critical writings can cast very little light on Kafka's religious development. We must therefore turn to the primary literature, to Kafka's diaries, letters and notebooks, from which a pattern of religious development, though a very nebulous one, does appear. For the sake of clarity, Kafka's life must be divided into four periods: from 1883 until 1911; from 1912 until 1916; from 1917 until 1919; and from 1920 until 1924.

1883 - 1911.

It is doubtful whether a child may be regarded as having a religious belief at all, but it is certain that the child is left with some impression, favourable or unfavourable, of the beliefs and practices of those around him and that this impression is not easily displaced by the more sophisticated religious experiences of adult life. Kafka's childhood impressions of Judaism can scarcely have been anything but unfavourable: his father belonged to the transitional generation of Jews who had migrated from the still comparatively devout countryside, from ghetto-like village communities to the towns. In Prague the ghetto remained, a voluntary ghetto of German-speaking Jews, whose community spirit was determined not by orthodoxy or religious zeal but by their need to maintain a position of economic and cultural superiority. Klaus Wagenbach writes:

> Es war eine eigentümliche, inselhafte Abgeschlossenheit, in der ein großer Teil des Prager Judentums lebte . . . ein

> Naturpark, dessen Ausdehnung sich immer mehr und mehr verkleinerte. Durch die fortschreitende Emanzipation traten an die Stelle orthodoxer Gläubigkeit scheinreligiöse Derivative: kulturelle oder geschäftliche Betriebsamkeit. (20)

Deprived of all spiritual content, the Judaism of the Prague ghetto was reduced to little more than a purely formal observance of the more important rituals and traditions. The dissimulation of the fathers produced merely apathy and rejection in the children. Felix Weltsch writes:

> Das Judentum selber bot diesen Menschen kaum einen Inhalt. Die religiöse Kontinuität war in der jungen Generation fast nicht mehr zu spüren, während sie der älteren Generation - Kafkas Vater etwa - zur inhaltlosen Form erstarrt war. (21)

Kafka's description of his father's Judaism corresponds in detail to the picture given by Eisner, Weltsch and Wagenbach. The father's attitude was, as he himself observes, "keine vereinzelte Erscheinung". In this matter at least, Kafka's reaction was unequivocal:

> Wie man mit diesem Material etwas Besseres tun könnte, als es möglichst schnell loszuwerden, verstand ich nicht; gerade dieses Loswerden schien mir die pietätvollste Handlung zu sein. (22)

On the 20th of September 1893, Kafka arrived for his first day at the "Altstädter Deutsches Gymnasium". His religious inheritance was nil, his scepticism already deep-rooted. It is scarcely surprising that the names which dominate the next ten years are Darwin, Haeckel and Nietzsche.

Kafka attended the "Altstädter Deutsches Gymnasium" from 1893 until 1901. Theoretically at least he now had the opportunity to overcome the unfavourable impression of Judaism which he had acquired as a child. Two periods in the week were devoted to religious instruction, the main subjects being: the Old Testament, Jewish Religion and History, and The Talmud. The classes were, however, regarded by the majority of pupils as a source of amusement rather than of serious thought. Of Nathan Grün, who undertook religious instruction in the "Obergymnasium", Felix Weltsch writes: "Seine durch seltsame Rassellaute, eine Art unterdrückten Spuckens unterbrochene Redeweise, wurde von uns Schülern gerne nachgeahmt."(23) Kafka's apathetic attitude towards Judaism remained both in his early school years and when he was a senior pupil in the "Obergymnasium". After a brief interest in Spinoza, during which he attempted to convert his fellow-pupil Hugo Bergmann, a convinced Zionist, to pantheism, Kafka's interest in religion waned completely. Encouraged by the lectures of the Natural History teacher, Adolf Gottwald, ("ein überzeugter Darwinist")(24) he took a keen interest in the works of Darwin and of the zoologist, Ernst Heinrich Haeckel. Although Darwin is the better known of the two, it is perhaps wiser to take Haeckel as an example, for, in spite of the popular misconception, Darwinism and atheism are by no means identical. Haeckel's "Die Welträtsel" appeared in 1899 when Kafka was sixteen. An uncompromising monist, Haeckel denied the immortality of the soul, the freedom of the will and the existence of a personal God. Kafka makes no reference to Haeckel in his diaries or letters. "Ungemein begeistert" is, however, the term Bergmann applies to Kafka's reading of "Die Welträtsel".(25) In the same

year Kafka and his friends Oskar Pollak and Hugo Hecht lent their support to the anti-clerical "Freie-Schule-Verein". Wagenbach records that Kafka's friendships with Pollak and Felix Pribram were based almost entirely upon his interest in Darwinism and atheism respectively, and that it was through Pollak that he was introduced to "Der Kunstwart". The friendship with Pollak - Kafka had not yet met Max Brod - lasted until the beginning of 1904, that is, until Kafka's third university year. "Kafka", writes Wagenbach, "stand noch vollständig unter dem Einfluß Oskar Pollaks und des "Kunstwarts".(26) "Der Kunstwart", edited by Ferdinand Avenarius, first appeared in October 1887. Kafka subscribed to the magazine from 1900 until 1904 and through it was introduced to Nietzsche's "Also Sprach Zarathustra", a book which must be regarded as one of the most important influences upon his religious thought. It is interesting that Kafka's first encounter with Max Brod, who was to become the most important of his religious interpreters, took the form of a discussion in which Brod attacked and Kafka defended Nietzsche. Kafka's enthusiasm for Nietzsche was unlimited: in 1900 he borrowed a copy of "Zarathustra" which he took with him on a vacation trip to Roztok, near Prague. There he met Selma Kohn who, in a letter to Brod almost 55 years later, recalled Kafka's enthusiasm for Nietzsche:

> Kennen Sie Roztok, den Wald? Erinnern Sie sich an den steilen Weg dahin und wie man plötzlich auf der herrlichsten Waldlichtung steht, das hohe Gras voll Himmelschlüssel, Marientränen, Glockenblumen und mitten darin eine sehr sehr alte Eiche! Unter dieser Eiche sind wir Kinder, Franz und ich, oft gesessen und er hat mir Nietzsche vorgelesen, was und ob ich es verstand, Dr. Brod, es liegen 55 Jahre dazwischen,

> Wir haben uns gegenseitig angeschwärmt, wie man damals war, ich war schön und er war sehr klug und beide waren wir so himmlisch jung. (27)

Towards the end of 1902 Kafka's friendship with Pollak came to an end and so, superficially at least, did his fanatical interest in Nietzsche. The period 1902 - 1906, during which Kafka attended lectures by Anton Marty, a pupil of Franz Brentano, and became a member of the "Louvrezirkel" or "Brentanistenkreis", is ignored by Brod and described in detail by Wagenbach who almost certainly exaggerates its importance. Neither Anton Marty nor Franz Brentano are mentioned anywhere in Kafka's letters or diaries, although the published volume of letters does in fact cover the period 1902 - 1906. The "Brentanistenkreis" has its importance, however, in so far as its members were less concerned with theology than with personal ethics. The emphasis upon soul-searching and guilt must, as we have already seen, have held a certain attraction for Kafka. Wagenbach attributes Kafka's later "ethischen Rigorismus" to the influence of the Brentano-school and, although this is certainly too specific, parallels can be found in the aphorisms of 1917 to 1919. Kafka's interest in the philosophy of Brentano and Marty may therefore be regarded as an early and very mild manifestation of the spiritual masochism which, nurtured by his meeting with F.B. and his consequent marriage-dilemma, only appeared in definite form in 1912. It is not until 1914 ("Der Prozeß") that Kafka resorts to theology for confirmation of his sense of guilt.

The period 1883 - 1911 ends with the arrival in Prague of the "Ostjüdische Schauspieltruppe", a Yiddish theatrical company from Lemberg. The entries in Kafka's diaries for 1911 and the beginning of 1912 take the

form, almost without exception, of critical comments upon the performances and personal anecdotes about the performers. Here a clear distinction must be made between the need for a people and the need for a belief. Kafka's need at this time was for a people, but the hopes which he placed in the Yiddish troupe were to be disappointed:

> Die Eindrucksfähigkeit für das Jüdische in diesen Stücken verläßt mich, weil sie zu gleichförmig sind und in ein Jammern ausarten, das auf vereinzelte kräftigere Ausbrüche stolz ist. Bei den ersten Stücken konnte ich denken, an ein Judentum geraten zu sein, in dem die Anfänge des meinigen ruhen und die sich zu mir hin entwickeln und dadurch in meinem schwerfälligen Judentum mich aufklären und weiterbringen werden, statt dessen entfernen sie sich, je mehr ich höre, von mir weg. Die Menschen bleiben natürlich und an die halte ich mich. (28)

It is clear that Kafka originally regarded the members of the Yiddish troupe as "real" Jews, in contrast to the assimilated "Scheinjuden" of the Prague ghetto, and that he had hopes of finding his Jewish roots among them; but the experiment proved unsuccessful. Whether these Eastern Jews were less orthodox and devout than he had expected, whether he was repelled by their inherent arrogance and air of superiority or was still too much under the influence of Nietzsche, is not quite clear. Whatever the cause, the gulf between Kafka and Judaism was merely widened during 1911. The people, as he says, remained, and he held fast to them. "Die Menschen" refers specifically to Frau Tschissik and Isak Löwy, two members of the troupe, whose rôle in sustaining Kafka's interest has perhaps been underestimated. Kafka was in love with Frau Tschissik and a fanatical admirer of Löwy whose "wandering-minstrel" life appealed to the Prague author,

frustrated in his literary ambitions and tied by family and business duties. By February 1912, Kafka's interest in Löwy and in the troupe had virtually disappeared; his distaste for Judaism and his basically atheistic attitude had merely been reinforced. Two years later, in January 1914, he was to write: "Was habe ich mit Juden gemeinsam? Ich habe kaum etwas mit mir gemeinsam und sollte mich ganz still, zufrieden damit, daß ich atmen kann, in einen Winkel stellen."(29)

1912 - 1916.

1912 is normally referred to by critics as the year in which Kafka achieved his literary breakthrough and, when one considers that in this year he wrote "Das Urteil", "Die Verwandlung" and the beginning of "Amerika", the statement seems accurate enough. It was, however, also the year in which he met F.B., the year which marked the beginning of his terrible internal struggle to get married and, finally, the first year in which his attitude to himself could be said to be truly pathological. Between 1912 and 1916 Kafka's emotional state gradually became more unstable, a process of deterioration which can be seen in the works themselves, in the progression from a relatively uncomplicated statement of bad conscience in "Das Urteil" to the masochistic horror of "Der Prozeß". What is pathological is not that Kafka wrote these works but that he unquestioningly approved the annihilation of his heroes for crimes which, by normal, ethical or even religious standards, are not crimes at all. It is, then, a period during which the unethical, the oppressive and the pathological hold sway.

The absence during these years either in the diaries or letters of any statement of religious belief, is scarcely surprising when one considers

that Kafka's outlook was still essentially atheistic, that the marriage-dilemma took precedence over every other issue and that he was at times on the verge of insanity. This period does, however, provide a certain insight into Kafka's almost utilitarian attitude to religion as a convenient source of judgement when self-condemnation flagged. We have already seen how, between 1912 and 1917, Kafka sought confirmation of his bachelor-guilt in Talmudic law. The following quotations are from the same period:

> Bibel ausgeschlagen. Von den ungerechten Richtern. Finde also meine Meinung, oder wenigstens die Meinung, die ich in mir bisher vorgefunden habe. Übrigens hat es keine Bedeutung, ich werde in solchen Dingen niemals sichtbar gelenkt, vor mir flattern nicht die Blätter der Bibel. (30)

> Die schönen kräftigen Sonderungen im Judentum. Man bekommt Platz. Man sieht sich besser, man beurteilt sich besser. (31)

One could scarcely describe such a man as religious, a man whose reading of the Bible has no significance, who is never visibly guided by the Scriptures and in whose presence the pages of the Bible do not flutter. But even for this man religion has its place: to confirm an opinion, "die ich in mir bisher vorgefunden habe" or: to act as a criterion by which "one sees onseself better, one judges oneself better".

From a religious point of view 1912 - 1916 is a period of "no change" in Kafka's life, a period during which he does not seem to have progressed far beyond his original atheism. It is, nonetheless, a period during which Kafka, though preoccupied with secular problems, became aware

that religion could fulfil a function which society could not, the function of confirming his own adverse judgements upon himself.

1917 - 1919.

This third period involves particular difficulties for the biographer, for it is no longer possible to place the author's life and work - least of all his religious position - into neat empirical packages. The complicated but not undecipherable pattern of cause and effect in Kafka's life seems to dissolve and the various component parts to become utterly disconnected. The year 1917 is particularly eventful but the relationship, if any, between the various events cannot be established with any finality. Firstly there is the marriage problem:

Kafka broke his first engagement, which had lasted only a matter of weeks, at the end of July 1914. Exactly three years later the engagement was renewed, only to come to a similar, if less abrupt conclusion. The diagnosis of tuberculosis on September 4th, 1917 marked the actual, if not the official end of this five-year-old relationship and, to some extent also, of the inner torments which had accompanied it. Kafka chose to regard the disease as psychic, as a physical expression of the emotional rigours of the past years:

> Manchmal scheint es mir, Gehirn und Lunge hätten sich ohne mein Wissen verständigt. "So geht es nicht weiter" hat das Gehirn gesagt und nach fünf Jahren hat sich die Lunge bereit erklärt, zu helfen. (32)

Here was incontrovertible evidence that he should free himself from the source of his unhappiness, from F.B. He welcomed the disease as a symbol

of future freedom:

> Du hast, soweit diese Möglichkeit überhaupt besteht, die Möglichkeit, einen Anfang zu machen. Verschwende sie nicht. Ist die Lungenwunde nur ein Sinnbild, wie du behauptest, Sinnbild der Wunde, deren Entzündung F. und deren Tiefe Rechtfertigung heißt, ist dies so, dann sind auch die ärztlichen Ratschläge (Licht, Luft, Sonne, Ruhe) Sinnbild. Fasse dieses Sinnbild an. (33)

But this period of optimism was short-lived: according to Brod, Kafka reinterpreted the disease as a punishment from God. He saw himself as guilty of having failed in the natural duty to marry, guilty of having wished for "eine gewaltsame Lösung"(34) to his problem and, finally, guilty of having caused F. endless torments and unhappiness. The relationship which had been characterised by guilt thus ended not with release but with an intensification of that guilt.

The story of Kafka's relationship with F.B., of his inner conflict and eventual refusal to marry at all has an important precedent, and one of which Kafka was fully aware, in Kierkegaard's engagement to Regina Olsen. In both cases the relationship lasted for approximately five years. For Kierkegaard, as for Kafka, marriage was, and remained an ideal; it represented at once the antidote to and the enemy of their respective states of melancholy and despair, states which they regarded as abnormal but productive. Each was tormented by doubts as to the desirability of marriage on the one hand and by fears as to his capacity to manage it successfully on the other; each explained his doubts and his eventual decision not to marry in terms of a sense of vocation which precluded the possibility of entering

into a binding relationship with any other human being: Regina Olsen writes:

> Kierkegaard's motive in this breach was the conception he had of his religious task; he did not dare to bind himself to anything upon earth lest it might check him in his calling; he must offer the best thing he possessed in order to work as God required him. The pain he was to inflict upon himself and me was unspeakably heavy and indeed left its mark for life. (35)

The "task", in Kafka's case, was not religious but literary:

> Alles, was nicht Literatur ist, langweilt mich und ich hasse es. Ich muß viel allein sein. Was ich geleistet habe, ist nur ein Erfolg des Alleinseins. Die Angst vor der Verbindung, dem Hinüberfließen. Dann bin ich nie mehr allein. (36)

There is reason to doubt whether either of these interpretations covers all the facts. Kafka, as we have already seen, was psychologically incapable of marriage, and biographers suggest that both physical and psychological factors determined the outcome of Kierkegaard's relationship with Regina:

> One cannot but think in this whole connection of some sort of sexual impotence so that it would finally be of a lack of virility that he [Kierkegaard] accused himself. But while the bodily factor must not be overlooked, the main emphasis must be psychological. We have to deal with a man who grew up under a sex-taboo. "The Idea of Dread" provides unmistakable evidence of this. To sum up then, his dread of sex, a degree of impotence which cannot be further defined, the bond between him and his father, and his own earlier fall - it was these which brought him to such an impasse. (37)

The parallel with Kafka's case is clear. Yet another point of comparison, however, is provided by the Danish philosopher's literary expression of his marriage-dilemma. In a letter to Brod, dated March 1918, Kafka wrote of Kierkegaard: "Das Problem seiner Ehe-Verwirklichung ist seine Hauptsache, seine bis ins Bewußtsein immerfort hinaufgetragene Hauptsache, ich sah das in 'Entweder-Oder', in 'Furcht und Zittern', in 'Wiederholung'." Surprisingly, this is not a case of oversubjective or biased reading, for each of the works which Kafka mentions was indeed intended either to repel Regina finally or to put before her a choice which Kierkegaard was convinced she could not make. In other words, they were designed to present in an oblique manner a demonstration both to Regina and to himself that it was impossible for them to marry. In "Fear and Trembling" Kierkegaard intended to draw a clear parallel between Abraham's sacrifice and his own, for as Abraham offered up Isaac to God, so he offered up his love for Regina to his religious vocation. One might compare the book to Kafka's "Das Urteil", which was also written primarily for one woman, bore the dedication, "für F.", and was also intended to demonstrate the impossibility of marriage. Both works are concerned with conflicting duties: to God and to Regina; to literature and to F. Kafka's treatment is admittedly very different from Kierkegaard's: the sacrifice of vocation, which is never contemplated in "Fear and Trembling", has already taken place at the beginning of "Das Urteil". The Russian friend has been betrayed and Georg is contemplating marriage. Here there is no act of faith and no Abraham for, according to Kierkegaard, the act of faith consisted in the paradox that, having reached the point of "infinite resignation", Abraham still believed

that Isaac would be returned to him. In Kafka's story, "Abraham" does not even leave home; he loses not only "Isaac" but his life as well. The two works thus succeed in making the point that marriage is impossible, but Kafka's hero neither makes the act of faith, nor keeps his beloved, nor survives.

The connection between Kierkegaard's relationship with Regina Olsen and Kafka's religious development may seem tenuous enough, but it is necessary to establish the exact nature of his interest in the Danish philosopher, in order to avoid the common and utterly unsubstantiated generalisation: Kafka's religious beliefs were strongly influenced by his reading of Kierkegaard. On the basis of what has been said above, of the extensive similarities between their attitude to women in general and the course of their engagements in particular, it would seem reasonable to suggest that Kafka may have been concerned less with Kierkegaard's theology than with his handling of the marriage issue. If Kafka was primarily attracted to Kierkegaard by the similarities in their attitude to marriage, there can be reasonable doubt regarding Kierkegaard's importance as a source of his religious thought; and this issue is central in Kafka criticism.

Kafka's first reference to Kierkegaard appears in his diaries in August 1913:

> Ich habe heute Kierkegaard "Buch des Richters" bekommen. Wie ich es ahnte, ist sein Fall trotz wesentlicher Unterschiede dem meinen sehr ähnlich, zumindest liegt er auf der gleichen Seite der Welt. Er bestätigt mich wie ein Freund. Ich entwerfe folgenden Brief an den Vater [F.s], den ich morgen, wenn ich die Kraft habe, wegschicken will. (38)

The "Buch des Richters" was an anthology of Kierkegaard's works, edited in 1905 by Hermann Gottsched, and composed of autobiographical rather than theological writings. This would seem to suggest an interest in the man rather than in his religious thought, but Kafka makes the point himself: "Wie ich ahnte ist sein Fall . . . dem meinen sehr gleich." It is clear from what follows that "sein Fall" refers to Kierkegaard's relationship with Regina Olsen. In the long letter to F.'s father, which he mentions here, Kafka sets out to demonstrate his unsuitability for marriage and appeals to his instability, neurosis, hatred of his job, sense of alienation and, above all, to his literary vocation:

> Mein Posten ist mir unerträglich, weil er meinem einzigen Verlangen und meinem einzigen Beruf, das ist der Literatur, widerspricht. Da ich nichts anderes bin als Literatur und nichts anderes sein kann und will, so kann mich mein Posten niemals zu sich reißen. Alles, was nicht Literatur ist, langweilt mich und ich hasse es. Eine Ehe könnte mich nicht verändern, ebenso wie mich mein Posten nicht verändern kann. (39)

This, then, was what drew Kafka to Kierkegaard, the conflict between marriage and vocation: "mein einziges Verlangen und mein einziger Beruf". Yet even here one cannot speak of an "influence"; there is no question of a revolution in Kafka's thought, nor even of a minor change in attitude. When Kafka buys the "Buch des Richters", he is already partially aware of the similarity between Kierkegaard's case and his own: "Wie ich es ahnte". What he seeks from Kierkegaard - and this will be true in 1917, as it is in 1913 - is not revelation but confirmation: "Er bestätigt mich wie ein Freund". July and August 1913 had been particularly difficult months

for Kafka, a period of crisis in his relationship with F.B. It was during this period that he drew up the list of arguments for and against his marriage, that he resigned himself to a bachelor existence and that he threatened to commit suicide. Kafka needed a friend, not merely a bachelor, but a man who had rejected marriage and who had given sound and preferably spiritual reasons for doing so; he needed authoritative confirmation of his own natural impulse not to marry.

Kierkegaard is not mentioned by Kafka again until October 1917. One month previously Professor Friedl Pick had diagnosed catarrh in the lungs and probable tuberculosis and Kafka, as we have seen, had used the disease to release himself from his engagement. On December 26th, the relationship ended for ever. It is certain that Kafka's uneasy conscience, his awareness of the harm which he had done during the previous five years and of the utterly false and cowardly way in which he had ended the relationship, drove him back to Kierkegaard. That he broke his engagement and renewed his interest in Kierkegaard simultaneously, is more than coincidence. Nor can there be any doubt that in this second phase it was again the marriage issue which interested him primarily, for the statement, "Das Problem seiner Ehe-Verwirklichung ist seine Hauptsache", is from 1917 and not from 1913.

It would be unwise, however, to suggest that Kafka was aware of nothing more in the works of the Danish philosopher than the disguised statement of a personal problem, for Kierkegaard, like Nietzsche, is a provocative and extreme philosopher whose ideas seem to demand either complete approval or absolute condemnation. In Kafka's case there can have been no question of condemnation, at least not in 1917. Kierkegaard's doctrine of the "teleological suspension of the ethical" and his belief that "we are

always in the wrong as against God" both provided considerable scope for self-castigation, overcoming at the same time any rational, humane or ethical defence of man. Thus, on the religious as well as on the secular level, his work was for Kafka a potential source of confirmation.

There is some doubt as to the extent of Kafka's knowledge of Kierkegaard's works, but it is certain that, in addition to the "Buch des Richters", he had read "Fear and Trembling" and "Either-Or". In November 1917 he writes to Max Brod:

> Kierkegaard ist ein Stern, aber über einer mir fast unzugänglichen Gegend, es freut mich, daß Du ihn jetzt lesen wirst, ich kenne nur "Furcht und Zittern". (40)

In "Fear and Trembling" Kierkegaard examines the whole question of faith and in particular Abraham's journey to Mount Moriah where, according to God's Will, he was to sacrifice his son Isaac. Kierkegaard refuses to allow compromise or any form of double-thinking: either Abraham was a homicidal maniac or every "knight of faith" must be prepared to sacrifice his dearest possession, whatever the cost or consequences; and this sacrifice, however unethical, will be justified by man's higher religious duty to God. This is the doctrine of the "teleological suspension of the ethical", by which religion, a form of super-ethic, may well stand as the justification for unethical or even criminal behaviour:

> If faith does not make it a holy action to desire to murder one's son, let the same judgement be visited upon everybody, Abraham and everyone else. The ethical expression of Abraham's action is that he wished to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he wished to sacrifice him. (41)

Kierkegaard's argument is never dishonest and rarely illogical; yet the above passage might easily be misunderstood, and with appalling consequences. Kierkegaard does not sufficiently clearly point out that the unethical murder is justified by faith only when it is God's Will. If Abraham had not been asked by God to sacrifice Isaac, if, as the result of some whim, he had decided to murder his son and thus prove his faith in God, then there could be no doubt of his guilt or perhaps of his insanity. This error of omission provides a certain insight into Kafka's case. One might describe his writing up to 1917 as a secular example of the "teleological suspension of the ethical". In each work an unethical event - the murder or suicide of the hero - is justified by reference to a higher duty; but the secular nature of this duty - to write; to marry - seems to rob the event of any possible justification and to leave only a residue of pathological horror. Kafka sacrifices his heroes not because he has been called to do so, but to satisfy a personal, masochistic whim. In 1917 this obsession with self-castigation - since all of Kafka's heroes are literary surrogates - takes on a religious aspect which would certainly have horrified even Kierkegaard: Kafka approaches religion with neither faith nor belief, and extracts from it a mandate whose execution, without faith, is unethical, irreligious (even to Kierkegaard) and diseased. He makes upon himself religious demands and applies to himself religious criteria of guilt and punishment, but without being religious. In other words, Kafka would have approved of Abraham's action, even if God did not exist. He is, to use his own expression, "ein Abraham, der ungerufen kommt". In Kierkegaard's theology, as in the story of his engagement to Regina Olsen, Kafka will have found the confirmation that he expected, but only by distortion. Deprived

of faith - "eine mir fast unzugängliche Gegend" - Kierkegaard's philosophy becomes nothing more than a pathological postulate, based on pseudo-religious premises and advocating physical and psychological atrocities. That the pathological and the religious go hand in hand during this period is a sad reflection not upon religion, nor even upon Kierkegaard, but upon the state of Kafka's mind.

The search for confirmation of his guilt was not, of course, limited to the works of Kierkegaard; theology is, after all, secondary literature. Yet in his reading of the Bible Kafka was just as selective and exclusive. Only the Fall interests him. This brings us to the "Acht Oktavhefte" and in particular to the "Betrachtungen über Sünde, Leid, Hoffnung und den wahren Weg",(42) the only source of first-hand information about Kafka's religious position. Much of this material is of little practical use. The 109 aphorisms, which were written between 1917 and 1919 and which provide the religious interpreters with their evidence, seem to comprise an inextricable collection of incomprehensible, casuistic and self-contradictory statements and it is difficult to reach any final conclusion either upon Kafka's religious position or upon the meaning of his works on the basis of such material.

It is remarkable that although Kafka's aphorisms are tacitly assumed to provide incontrovertible evidence that he was a "religious author", only one critic(43) has ever regarded them as worthy of a separate article; less remarkable perhaps when one considers just how little can be said. The use of ultimate categories such as "das Gute", "das Teuflische" and "das Unzerstörbare", the destructively analytical nature of the argument - where

there is argument at all - and the preoccupation with ethical failure, all suggest the influence of Brentano. Yet nothing coherent enough to be termed "a philosophy" emerges. The aphorisms seem to aim at mystification rather than clarity, to be sophistical exercises in the art of word-jugglery. Each argument turns back upon itself; after tortuous reasoning the premiss is denied, but so too is the conclusion that the premiss was invalid:

> Ein Mensch hat freien Willen, und zwar dreierlei: Erstens war er frei, als er dieses Leben wollte; jetzt kann er es allerdings nicht mehr rückgängig machen, denn er ist nicht mehr jener, der es damals wollte, es wäre denn insoweit, als er seinen damaligen Willen ausführt, indem er lebt.
>
> Zweitens ist er frei, indem er die Gangart und den Weg dieses Lebens wählen kann.
>
> Drittens ist er frei, indem er als derjenige, der einmal wieder sein wird, den Willen hat, sich unter jeder Bedingung durch das Leben gehen und auf diese Weise zu sich kommen zu lassen, und zwar auf einem zwar wählbaren, aber jedenfalls derartig labyrinthischen Weg, daß er kein Fleckchen dieses Lebens unberührt läßt.
>
> Das ist das Dreierlei des freien Willens, es ist aber auch, da es gleichzeitig ist, ein Einerlei und ist im Grunde so sehr Einerlei, daß es keinen Platz hat für einen Willen, weder für einen freien noch unfreien. (44)

It seems reasonable to suggest that behind these aphorisms there stands not a man of God but a logician. Logic is not, however, a philosophy but a formal method, is not concerned with metaphysical truths but with sequence. Kafka, it must be remembered, was not only an author but a lawyer and a Talmud scholar, and in each of these capacities he was required

to develop the ability to argue from every side, to invent and to detect nuances of meaning, to defend and to attack every position. Only one conclusion can be drawn with certainty, and this conclusion is of a statistical nature: almost one third of the aphorisms deal with guilt, original sin and the expulsion from Paradise: "Sündig ist der Stand, in dem wir uns befinden, unabhängig von Schuld."(45) This is the only detectable theme.

The nature and genesis of personal belief is too wide and complicated an issue for the purposes of this section; one might, nonetheless, make a general division into three categories: those who are brought up in a religious tradition and never undergo any serious or lasting period of disbelief; those who experience a sudden and mystical conversion; and, finally, those who arrive at belief through a sincere and perhaps extensive examination of the arguments for and against religion. And yet Kafka belongs to none of these categories, least of all the first:

> Wie man mit diesem Material etwas Besseres tun könnte, als es möglichst schnell loszuwerden, verstand ich nicht. (46)

Nor is there any evidence to suggest that Kafka underwent a dramatic conversion or came to any spontaneous, natural or positive belief. Indeed, the opposite is the case, for his reading in the Bible and in theology is deliberate and selective. His exclusive preoccupation with the Fall, with sin, with the stories of Abraham and Job, and with the theology of Kierkegaard and Martin Buber, does not suggest conversion but serves to underline the one constant in his personality, his neurotic obsession with guilt. The new-found religious zeal which appears to dominate the years

1917 - 1919, is neither a new nor a truly religious phenomenon, but rather a new and more general formulation of an old theme. Kafka progresses from "I am guilty" to "Mankind is guilty and therefore I am guilty", and that is really no progress at all. Yet in this "therefore" he had found part of what he required from religion, a quasi-logical demonstration of the validity of his sense of guilt.

Thus, neither a Freudian nor a Kantian approach to Kafka's god could have proved entirely satisfactory, for he is neither a projection of the father nor a manifest deity but a conscious invention, conceived, again in opposition to the Freudians, not as a comfort but as a scourge.

One final point must be made: it is that while there is no evidence to suggest that Kafka underwent any form of religious conversion and while he sought confirmation of his sense of guilt in religion, his position after 1917 cannot be fully explained in terms of Pelagian psychology. Though Kafka did not succeed in making the leap of faith, his attempt to do so was completely sincere. The point will be developed in Chapter VIII in the section "Deus Absconditus : The Problem of Faith".

1920 - 1924.

Kafka's period of religious extremism did not last beyond 1919: from 1920 until his death in 1924 he seems to adopt a more normal, more healthy attitude to life and to himself. As his bodily state deteriorates, his mental state improves. Whereas, in the early diaries and letters, the reader is merely irritated by the conscious wallowing in feelings of guilt and inferiority, he is deeply moved by the later expression of Kafka's despair and unhappiness, by the intensity of his loneliness and suffering in

these last years. The desire for an honest appraisal of his own situation, of both past and present, is evident in Kafka's diaries and letters. He becomes increasingly aware of his own responsibility for his mental deterioration, of the deliberate process of self-destruction in which he has been engaged for almost ten years:

> Die Entwicklung war einfach. Als ich noch zufrieden war, wollte ich unzufrieden sein und stieß mich mit allen Mitteln der Zeit und der Tradition, die mir zugänglich waren, in die Unzufriedenheit, nun wollte ich zurückkehren können. Ich war also immer unzufrieden, auch mit meiner Zufriedenheit. Merkwürdig, daß aus Komödie bei genügender Systematik Wirklichkeit werden kann. Mein geistiger Niedergang begann mit kindischem, allerdings kindisch-bewußtem Spiel. Ich ließ zum Beispiel Gesichtsmuskeln künstlich zusammenzucken, ich ging mit hinter dem Kopf gekreuzten Armen über den Graben. Kindlich-widerliches, aber erfolgreiches Spiel. (Ähnlich war es mit der Entwicklung des Schreibens, nur daß diese Entwicklung leider später stockte.) Wenn es möglich ist, auf diese Weise das Unglück herbeizuzwingen, sollte alles herbeizwingbar sein. Ich kann, so sehr mich die Entwicklung zu widerlegen scheint und so sehr es überhaupt meinem Wesen widerspricht, so zu denken, auf keine Weise zugeben, daß die ersten Anfänge meines Unglücks innerlich notwendig waren, sie mögen Notwendigkeit gehabt haben, aber nicht innerliche, sie kamen angeflogen wie Fliegen und wären so leicht wie sie zu vertreiben gewesen. (47)

When death is imminent, the desire to formulate and crystallise past experience and achievement is natural enough, but the temptation to remain contented with that formulation, to rest upon one's laurels, however few, must be considerable. It is therefore doubly surprising that these last few

years of Kafka's life are years of decision and action. It is as if he had rejected the past and were trying to shift his direction at the very last moment. But this shift in direction did not include religious belief. In July 1922, two years before his death, he wrote of himself: "lieblos, fremd dem Glauben, nicht einmal das Gebet für das Seelenheil ist von ihm zu erwarten."(48) It was perhaps less to God than to his fellow men, and specifically to the Jews, that Kafka turned in these last years. Yet one must guard against oversimplification. When Janouch writes: "Kafka war überzeugter Anhänger des Zionismus",(49) he gives a completely distorted impression of a Jew sharing with other Jews a political and religious ideology. This is certainly not the case. The distortion lies in the word "überzeugt", for Kafka's Zionism is not a matter of conviction but the expression of a purely personal and spontaneous desire to belong to a community, to lead a productive, even average existence. And this, as Kafka sees it, involves a rejection of intellectualism, of the things of the mind, of unrealities. The nature of Kafka's Zionism is perhaps best illustrated by the following conversation with Janouch:

> Während meines nächsten Besuches bei Kafka fragte ich:
> "Gehen Sie noch zu dem Tischler nach Karolinenthal?"
> "Sie wissen davon?"
> "Mein Vater hat es mir gesagt."
> "Nein, ich gehe schon lange nicht mehr hin. Mein Gesundheitszustand erlaubt es nicht mehr. Seine Majestät der Körper."
> "Das kann ich mir vorstellen. Die Arbeit in der verstaubten Werkstätte ist nichts Angenehmes."
> "Da irren Sie aber. Ich liebe die Arbeit in der

Werkstätte. Der Geruch des gehobelten Holzes, das Singen der Säge, die Hammerschläge, alles bezauberte mich. Der Nachmittag schwand nur so dahin. Der Abend setzte mich immer in Erstaunen."

"Da waren Sie sicherlich müde."

"Ich war müde, aber auch glücklich. Es gibt nichts Schöneres als so ein reines, greifbares, allgemein nützliches Handwerk. Außer der Tischlerei habe ich schon in der Landwirtschaft und in der Gärtnerei gearbeitet. Das war alles viel schöner und wertvoller als der Frondienst in der Kanzlei. Anscheinend ist man da etwas Höheres, Besseres; aber das ist eben nur Anschein. In Wirklichkeit ist man bloß einsamer und darum unglücklicher. Das ist alles. Intellektuelle Arbeit reißt den Menschen aus der menschlichen Gemeinschaft. Das Handwerk dagegen führt ihn zu den Menschen. Schade, daß ich nicht mehr in der Werkstatt oder im Garten arbeiten kann."

"Sie möchten doch nicht Ihren Posten hier aufgeben?"

"Warum nicht? Ich träumte davon, daß ich als Landarbeiter oder Handwerker nach Palästina gehe."

"Sie würden alles hier zurücklassen?"

"Alles, um ein sinnvolles Leben in Sicherheit und Schönheit zu finden." (50)

The dream never materialised; Kafka did not manage to visit Palestine before his death. In the Summer of 1923, however, while on holiday in Müritz, a Baltic sea resort, Kafka came upon a colony of the "Berliner Jüdisches Volksheim". His enthusiasm and happiness during this period are unprecedented:

Durch die Bäume kann ich die Kinder spielen sehn. Fröhliche, gesunde, leidenschaftliche Kinder. Ostjuden, durch Westjuden vor der Berliner Gefahr gerettet. Die

> halben Tage und Nächte ist das Haus, der Wald und der Strand voll Gesang. Wenn ich unter ihnen bin, bin ich nicht glücklich, aber vor der Schwelle des Glücks.
>
> Das Meer ist wahrhaftig in den 10 Jahren, seitdem ich es nicht mehr gesehen habe, schöner, mannigfaltiger, lebendiger, jünger geworden. Aber mehr Freude macht mir noch eine Ferienkolonie des Berliner Jüdischen Volksheims, gesunde, fröhliche Kinder, an denen ich mich wärme. Heute werde ich mit ihnen Freitag-Abend feiern, ich glaube zum ersten Mal in meinem Leben. (51)

Through this experience and his love for a member of the colony, Dora Dymant, a remarkable psychological change was effected in Kafka. He returned from Müritz, a man of decision, left Prague at the end of July, in spite of strong opposition from his parents, went to Berlin and there set up house with Dora in the suburb of Steglitz. Shortly afterwards Kafka wrote to Dora's father, a pious and orthodox Jew, to ask for permission to marry his daughter. The father refused. Kafka was not a practising Jew and not acceptable as a member of the family of such a pious man. The episode provides an adequate summary of the last stage in Kafka's religious development and also a general indication as to the meaning of "Das Schloß". A non-practising Jew, a man "fremd dem Glauben", is no Jew at all. He stands not only apart from those beliefs upon which the community is founded, but, by virtue of his disbelief, in opposition to them. He is unacceptable and, if he wishes to be accepted, his position is tragic. Kafka wished to be accepted but was either unwilling or unable to make the leap of faith. The "K." of "Das Schloß" is Kafka's first real hero: in attacking the passivity of the villagers, their unquestioning acceptance of the irrational and

unethical demands of the castle authorities, he sets himself up as the champion of reason and the unrelenting opponent of blind faith. Kafka's final attitude is thus in direct opposition to Abraham's. In the end it is the ethical and not the religious which triumphs.

It is clearly difficult to provide any concise summary of this material or to find a single term which will adequately describe Kafka's religious position. In 1920 he wrote:

> Manche leugnen den Jammer durch den Hinweis auf die Sonne, er leugnet die Sonne durch den Hinweis auf den Jammer. Die Kraft zu verneinen . . . haben wir immer, den Mut aber nicht. (52)

Günther Anders comments:

> "Den Mut aber nicht". Das heißt: Kafka war, wenn wir diese Stelle ernst nehmen dürfen, ungläubig. Aber er hatte nicht den Mut zu seiner eigenen Ungläubigkeit. (53)

In other words, Kafka was an atheist malgré lui. This is the most accurate summary possible of his position.

Conclusion.

The history of Kafka's religious development may be divided into four periods: from 1883 until 1911; from 1912 until 1916; from 1917 until 1919; and from 1920 until 1924.

In the first period, comprising Kafka's school and university years and his entry into business life, he proceeds from religious indifference to a total rejection of the Judaism of the Prague ghetto and, finally, to atheism. The principal influences upon his thought during this period are Darwin, Haeckel and Nietzsche whose "Also Sprach Zarathustra" must be regarded as of paramount importance in any study of Kafka's religious development. A revival of Kafka's interest in Judaism occurs at the end of this first period with the arrival in Prague of the "Ostjüdische Schauspieltruppe", but this interest must on the whole be regarded as social rather than religious. Kafka's eventual disappointment in the troupe, and his failure to find his "Jewish roots" among its members served merely to widen the gulf between himself and Judaism.

In the second period, during which Kafka met his future fiancée, F.B., and achieved his literary breakthrough, no fundamental change can be observed in his religious thought. The period does, however, provide a certain insight into Kafka's almost utilitarian attitude to religion as a convenient source of judgement, when self-condemnation flagged, although this attitude only becomes apparent in 1917. Until that date Kafka's religious position must be regarded as atheistic.

The third period in Kafka's religious development is marked by the final breaking of his engagement and by the official diagnosis of his

tuberculosis. Kafka at first interprets the disease as psychic but then as a punishment from God for having failed in the natural duty to marry and for having caused F.B. endless torments and unhappiness. In Kierkegaard's engagement to Regina Olsen he finds an important precedent for his own relationship with F.B., and is thus drawn to read the work of the Danish philosopher, with which he is already familiar. One cannot, however, suggest that Kafka was profoundly influenced by his reading of Kierkegaard. It is more probably that his attitude to the Danish philosopher and to theology in general was determined in part by his neurotic obsession with personal guilt, by his "spiritual masochism", and that he consciously selected those doctrines which would confirm his belief in his own inherent sinfulness. During this period, a period of religious extremism, the pathological and the religious thus go hand in hand. Ultimately, therefore, neither a Freudian nor a Kantian approach to Kafka's god can prove entirely satisfactory, for he is neither a projection of the father nor a manifest deity but a conscious invention, conceived not as a comfort but as a scourge.

Kafka's religious position after 1917 cannot, however, be fully explained in terms of Pelagian psychology. If his beliefs were pathological in origin, his religious position was ultimately characterised not by his neurotic obsession with personal guilt, but by his sincere and tragically unsuccessful search for faith.

In the final period Kafka becomes considerably less extreme and more orthodox in his attitude to religion. The period is characterised by his vain struggle to make the leap of faith and by the reappearance of Zionistic interests which are, however, the expression less of a political or religious

ideology than of a purely personal and spontaneous desire to belong to a community and to lead a productive, even average existence. This "desire to belong" is expressed by Kafka in "Das Schloß", as is his final attitude to the question of faith. In the end, Kafka appears as the unrelenting opponent of blind faith, as a defender of the ethical rather than the religious, and thus as one totally opposed to the philosophy of Kierkegaard.

In summary, it may be said that Kafka sought faith but was unable to find it, that he was not prepared to sacrifice reason to belief and that he remained an "atheist malgré lui".

C H A P T E R VII

"In der Strafkolonie".

Kafka wrote "In der Strafkolonie" in December 1914. Almost three years later, in August 1917, several revised versions of the end of the story appear in his diaries. These revisions are not merely stylistic; they change the meaning of the work radically and indicate a corresponding change in the author's point of view. Whereas, in the 1914 version, the collapse of the apparatus of punishment and the ignominious death of the officer had suggested that the traditional penal system was gone for ever, and with it all hope of the prophesied return of the Old Commandant, in the revised version of 1917 the officer, now an almost Christ-like figure, returns, victorious, from the grave:

> "Meine Anerkennung", mußte der Reisende sagen und sagte es gerne. "Ein Taschenspielerkunststück?" fragte er noch. "Nein," sagte der Offizier, "ein Irrtum Ihrerseits, ich bin hingerichtet, wie Sie es befehlen." Noch aufmerksamer horchten jetzt Kapitän und Matrosen. Und sahen sämtlich, wie jetzt der Offizier über seine Stirn hinstrich und einen krumm aus der geborstenen Stirn vorragenden Stachel enthüllte. (1)

The resurrection of the officer might be described as a partial fulfilment of the prophecy, "daß der Kommandant nach einer bestimmten Anzahl von Jahren auferstehen und aus diesem Hause seine Anhänger zur Wiedereroberung der Kolonie führen wird". It involves at least the complete justification of the Old Commandant's penal methods and, in particular, of the inhuman practice of inscribing the offender's crime upon his body. There is in the original version no suggestion that any such miraculous event might be possible. The death of the officer seems irrevocable and even the enlightenment of the sixth hour, which has been granted to far lesser men,

is denied to him:

> Hierbei sah er fast gegen Willen das Gesicht der Leiche. Es war, wie es im Leben gewesen war; kein Zeichen der versprochenen Erlösung war zu entdecken; was alle anderen in der Maschine gefunden hatten, der Offizier fand es nicht; die Lippen waren fest zusammengedrückt, die Augen waren offen, hatten den Ausdruck des Lebens, der Blick war ruhig und überzeugt, durch die Stirn ging die Spitze des großen, eisernen Stachels. (2)

Why did Kafka choose to rewrite the end of "In der Strafkolonie" in 1917, when the manuscript was already in the hands of his publisher, Kurt Wolff? What are the issues involved in the story? What determined the sudden change in Kafka's attitude to these issues? Finally, how can the work be related to the pattern of Kafka's religious development, described in Chapter VI? It is the purpose of this chapter to provide a satisfactory answer to each of these questions.

In his book "Kafka - Pro und Contra", Günther Anders puts forward the following interpretation of Kafka's work: "Von der Situation 'Gott ist tot' geht nun alles, was Kafka schreibt, aus."(3) Anders here oversimplifies the issue by ignoring the many non-religious themes - marriage, literature, profession, etc. - that appear throughout Kafka's work. While it is true that Kafka was greatly impressed by Nietzsche's philosophy, there can be little value in any critical approach which reduces the author's personality and thought to nothing more than the sum total of influences upon him. Indeed, when dealing with any aspect of Kafka's thought, it is perhaps unwise to think in terms of "influences" at all. An author's consciousness is not

a blank sheet upon which can be indelibly or eternally inscribed the words and ideas contained in every book that he is known to have read. He must, like other men, be credited with the ability to choose his reading material and to reject what he does not like or cannot believe; and the nature of his choice is probably the most enlightening thing of all, for it reveals certain predispositions and thus, indirectly, certain fundamental elements in his personality. In constantly searching for influences, the critic attributes to the author an almost child-like mentality, for while the child reads primarily in order to learn, the adult approaches most works with certain fixed ideas, often seeking confirmation rather than enlightenment. It was for confirmation that Kafka read the works of Kierkegaard and most probably the works of Nietzsche too. As Kierkegaard confirmed him in his decision not to marry and in his belief in personal guilt, so Nietzsche confirmed him in his rejection of religion, for Kafka was uncertain about each of these issues: he wanted to marry, but was incapable of marriage; he wanted to believe, but was incapable of belief. In the conflict which rages in Kafka between scepticism and faith, scepticism is victorious, but Kafka is uneasy about this victory. His atheism is never militant; he is no Nietzsche, but a man who lacks faith and is deeply troubled by his lack. If, by "die Situation 'Gott ist tot'", Anders means Kafka's failure to make the leap of faith, or indeed the failure of his generation, then we are prepared to accept the interpretation with the qualification that this situation does not appear in Kafka's works until 1914, that is to say until "In der Strafkolonie". Nietzsche's shadow does indeed fall darkly across this work, but his philosophy is neither totally accepted nor totally rejected for, like each of Kafka's

works, "In der Strafkolonie" is born of uncertainty and uneasiness. In November 1916, Kafka wrote of the story:

> Zur Erklärung dieser letzten Erzählung füge ich nur hinzu, daß nicht nur sie peinlich ist, daß vielmehr unsere allgemeine und meine besondere Zeit gleichfalls sehr peinlich war und ist und meine besondere sogar noch länger peinlich als die allgemeine. (4)

There can be little doubt that by the death of the Old Commandant and the gradual decay of the system of values which he had instituted, Kafka intended to portray the "death of God" and the subsequent and inevitable disappearance of all absolute criteria of morality, guilt and punishment. The divinity of the Old Commandant is virtually beyond question, for in his many eulogies the officer attributes to his former master superhuman qualities which would seem to make any interpretation in terms of father-fixation or social criticism simply absurd. Kafka's terminology is deliberately religious: the officer speaks of the Old Commandant's wisdom, his strength of conviction and his power, mentions prophecy and faith, and dreams of forcing the unbeliever to his knees, to make the acknowledgement: "Alter Kommandant, vor dir beuge ich mich." Even the explorer, whose presence in the penal colony depends solely upon his reputation for objectivity and scientific detachment, is amazed that one man should have combined so many talents in himself:

> "Handzeichnungen des Kommandanten selbst?" fragte der Reisende: "Hat er denn alles in sich vereinigt? War er Soldat, Richter, Konstrukteur, Chemiker, Zeichner?" "Jawohl", sagte der Offizier kopfnickend, mit starrem, nachdenklichem Blick. (5)

Elsewhere in the narrative, Kafka refers to these drawings, the blue-prints of the machine, as "die Schrift"; in spite of the ambiguity of the word, it is quite certain that he intended this as an allusion to "Die Heilige Schrift". Certainly, these drawings, which contain details of punishment for every conceivable crime and which the officer calls "das Teuerste, was ich habe", are themselves sacrosanct. The officer is not only unwilling to let them out of his possession, but even washes his hands before taking from his breast-pocket the leather case in which they are contained. It becomes clear that he regards the drawings as inviolable: "Als auch das nichts half, fuhr er mit dem kleinen Finger in großer Höhe, als dürfe das Blatt auf keinen Fall berührt werden, über das Papier hin, um auf diese Weise dem Reisenden das Lesen zu erleichtern."(6) In a specifically Jewish context such behaviour would not be surprising, for Jewish ecclesiastical law is more stringent in its attitude to the Scriptures than is its Christian counterpart. Failure to wash one's hands before reading the Bible is regarded as a mark of disrespect, and the scrolls of the Torah, which are kept in the synagogue, are not normally handled at all. If the reader wishes to follow a particular passage, he may do so with an ornamented pointer in a manner similar to that described in the passage above. It is also possible that when describing the small, leather brief-case, which the officer somehow manages to keep in his breast-pocket, Kafka had in mind the phylacteries worn by pious Jews: small leather boxes containing passages of Scripture, especially the Ten Commandments which might, without undue licence, be called the plans or "blue-prints" of morality.

For much of this material one requires, of course, a specific

knowledge of Jewish ritual and tradition, but even if such information were not at hand, the prevalently religious nature of the work would still be apparent: the Old Commandant was God, and God is now dead. In a dilapidated tea-house his body lies buried. On the gravestone, in very small letters, is the following inscription:

> Hier ruht der alte Kommandant. Seine Anhänger, die jetzt keinen Namen tragen dürfen, haben ihm das Grab gegraben und den Stein gesetzt. Es besteht eine Prophezeiung, daß der alte Kommandant nach einer bestimmten Anzahl von Jahren auferstehen und aus diesem Hause seine Anhänger zur Wieder= eroberung der Kolonie führen wird. Glaubet und wartet! (7)

The tomb of the Old Commandant thus lies underneath a table in a tea-house, that makes upon the explorer an impression of tradition and power, normally associated with churches and cathedrals. His death has been ignominious and his burial undignified, a matter of shame even to the officer. In 1882, Nietzsche wrote in "Die fröhliche Wissenschaft":

> Wohin ist Gott? . . . ich will es euch sagen! Wir haben ihn getödtet - ihr und ich! Wir Alle sind seine Mörder! Hören wir noch Nichts von dem Lärm der Todten= gräber, welche Gott begraben? Was sind denn diese Kirchen noch, wenn sie nicht die Grüfte und Grabmäler Gottes sind? (8)

The "death of God" is thus the fundamental postulate of "In der Strafkolonie". In the course of the narrative Kafka investigates the effect of his death upon the social and moral structure of the penal colony, and upon the functioning of the apparatus of punishment which he had invented. Before examining Kafka's conclusions, we must, however, attempt to find a

more specific definition of the nature of this inanimate object, which appears to play a more important rôle in the story than either the human beings or the Old Commandant himself.

Kafka's literary activity in 1914 was not, of course, limited to the writing of "In der Strafkolonie". In August he also began work on "Der Prozeß". Emrich has rightly described the penal system which appears in the shorter work as : "genau das verkleinerte Modell des Gerichtsverfahrens im Roman 'Der Prozeß'."(9) In spite of its hierarchical structure, the "Gerichtsorganismus" which condemns Josef K. to death is no less automatic and impersonal than the machine which inscribes the victim's crime upon his body. Indeed, it is the function of the Court in "Der Prozeß" to inscribe the knowledge of guilt upon the mind of the accused. Significantly, however, the Court fails in this function, while the machine, at least during the lifetime of the Old Commandant, does not. The continued existence of God seems to be a determining factor in the smooth and efficient running of the wheels of justice and punishment. The similarity between the two works is, in fact, remarkable and is perhaps best illustrated by quoting the relevant passages consecutively: firstly, there is the central issue, the problem of guilt: in both works the guilt of the accused is assumed to be beyond question. He is therefore neither told the nature of his crime nor allowed any opportunity to defend himself or to appeal against the decision of his judges. His guilt is seen as a state of being and not as resulting from a particular crime or moral offence:

> "Prozeß": Unter diesen Verhältnissen ist natürlich die Verteidigung in einer sehr ungünstigen und schwierigen Lage. Aber auch das

> ist beabsichtigt. Die Verteidigung ist nämlich durch das Gesetz nicht eigentlich gestattet, sondern nur geduldet, und selbst darüber, ob aus der betreffenden Gesetzesstelle wenigstens Duldung herausgelesen werden soll, besteht Streit. Es gibt daher strenggenommen gar keine vom Gericht anerkannten Advokaten.
>
> . . . Darin stimmten aber alle überein, daß leichtsinnige Anklagen nicht erhoben werden und daß das Gericht, wenn es einmal anklagt, fest von der Schuld des Angeklagten überzeugt ist. Niemals ist das Gericht davon abzubringen. (10)

"In der Strafkolonie": Der Reisende hatte verschiedenes fragen wollen, fragte aber im Anblick des Mannes nur: "Kennt er sein Urteil?" "Nein", sagte der Offizier: "Es wäre nutzlos, es ihm zu verkünden. Er erfährt es ja auf seinem Leib." "Aber daß er überhaupt verurteilt wurde, das weiß er doch?" "Auch nicht", sagte der Offizier. "Dann weiß also der Mann auch jetzt noch nicht, wie seine Verteidigung aufgenommen wurde?" "Er hat keine Gelegenheit gehabt, sich zu verteidigen", sagte der Offizier: "Der Grundsatz, nach dem ich entscheide, ist: Die Schuld ist immer zweifellos." (11)

In the second of these quotations, the questions put to the officer by the explorer and the latter's sense of horror at the answers which he receives correspond in general terms to those questions which everyone who reads "Der Prozeß" feels obliged to ask, and to his reaction upon learning the answers from the narrative. One essential difference between "Der Prozeß" and "In der Strafkolonie" is that while these questions and answers remain unspoken in the novel, they are clearly formulated in the short story; and this is explained by the presence in the later work of an "impartial observer", the explorer.

The similarity between the two works is not, however, limited to general issues, but extends to the smallest details: in his interviews with Josef K., the Advocate Huld constantly stresses the complexity and delicacy of balance of the machine of justice; it remains, as he puts it, "gewissermaßen ewig in der Schwebe".(12) Similarly, in "In der Strafkolonie", the officer speaks of "ein eigentümliches Apparat . . . sehr zusammengesetzt" and of "die Zartheit der Schwingung".(13) Both machines are as incomprehensible as they are complex. To the explorer the Old Commandant's blueprint, which must by this analogy be compared to the books of the Law in "Der Prozeß", is nothing more than a labyrinth of indecipherable lines, crossing and recrossing one another and so tightly packed that he finds it difficult to discern the blank spaces between them:

> "Lesen Sie", sagte der Offizier. "Ich kann nicht", sagte der Reisende. "Es ist doch deutlich", sagte der Offizier. "Es ist sehr kunstvoll", sagte der Reisende ausweichend, "aber ich kann es nicht entziffern." "Ja", sagte der Offizier, lachte und steckte die Mappe wieder ein, "es ist keine Schönschrift für Schulkinder." (14)

Much the same difficulty is experienced by the commercial traveller Block, when he attempts to decipher the books of the Law lent to him by the Advocate Huld; it is particularly interesting to note that in this passage from "Der Prozeß" Kafka again refers to the device of tracing the line with one's finger:

> Er hat den ganzen Tag über die gleiche Seite gelesen, und beim Lesen den Finger die Zeilen entlanggeführt. Immer, wenn ich zu ihm hineinsah, hat er geseufzt, als mache ihm das Lesen

> viel Mühe. Die Schriften, die du ihm geliehen hast, sind wahrscheinlich schwer verständlich. "Ja", sagte der Advokat, "das sind sie allerdings." (15)

Each of these points of comparison, general or particular, indicates that the same phenomenon is being described in "In der Strafkolonie" as that represented by the Court in "Der Prozeß", that the apparatus, whose function it is to awaken in the accused an awareness of guilt and through that awareness to bring him to salvation, is conscience, the "invention" of God.

We are thus presented in "In der Strafkolonie" with a description of the machine of conscience under two régimes, the old and the new. During the lifetime of the Old Commandant conscience thrived. The execution of a condemned man was an event not to be missed. People crowded into the valley in such numbers to watch the ceremony that it was impossible to grant all the requests for favourable vantage-points. Then, early in the morning, the Old Commandant arrived to supervise the execution. His appearance was greeted with fanfares, for in those days the Commandant's supreme authority was universally accepted. Finally the condemned man was laid under the Harrow, not by any subordinate but by the Old Commandant himself. The ceremony of execution began. The machine operated silently and efficiently. Only the half-muffled sighs of the condemned man could be heard. In the still, hallowed atmosphere the people waited, many with closed eyes, for the sixth hour, for the promised redemption:

> Nun, und dann kam die sechste Stunde! Es war unmöglich, allen die Bitte, aus der Nähe zuschauen zu dürfen zu gewähren. Der Kommandant in seiner Einsicht ordnete an, daß vor allem die Kinder berücksichtigt werden sollten. Wie nahmen wir alle

> den Ausdruck der Verklärung von dem gemarterten Gesicht, wie hielten wir unsere Wangen in den Schein dieser endlich erreichten und schon vergehenden Gerechtigkeit! Was für Zeiten, mein Kamerad! (16)

In an article in "The Kafka Problem", Austin Warren wrote of "In der Strafkolonie": "Kafka comes closest to allegory in 'The Penal Colony', a myth which, though full of literal horror, is obviously not a companion-piece to 'The Pit and the Pendulum'."(17) One might add to this that against the pathological horror of Kafka's narrative, "The Pit and the Pendulum" would rank as a bed-time story. In his descriptions of the machine of execution Kafka has drawn extensively upon the resources of technical information which he accumulated in the "Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt" and has thus succeeded in creating an impression of scientific horror that is unparalleled in the works of Poe, Orwell or Aldous Huxley. As Gregor Samsa's transformation was not a dream, so this is not a nightmare. With a wealth of realistic detail that is reminiscent of Flaubert's "Trois Contes", Kafka builds his torture-machine to strict specifications.(18) The first of the following quotations is from "In der Strafkolonie", the second from an article written by Kafka in 1909 for the annual report of the "Anstalt":

1) Das Bett und der Zeichner hatten gleichen Umfang und sahen wie zwei dunkle Truhen aus. Der Zeichner war etwa zwei Meter über dem Bett angebracht; beide waren in den Ecken durch vier Messingstangen verbunden, die in der Sonne fast Strahlen warfen. Zwischen den Truhen schwebte an einem Stahlband die Egge.

"Sie sehen", sagte der Offizier, "zweierlei Nadeln in

vielfacher Anordnung. Jede lange hat eine kurze neben sich. Die lange schreibt nämlich, und die kurze spritzt Wasser aus, um das Blut abzuwaschen und die Schrift immer klar zu erhalten. Das Blutwasser wird dann hier in kleine Rinnen geleitet und fließt endlich in diese Hauptrinne, deren Abfluß= rohr in die Grube führt. Um es nun jedem zu ermöglichen, die Ausführung des Urteils zu überprüfen, wurde die Egge aus Glas gemacht. Es hat einige technische Schwierigkeiten verursacht, die Nadeln darin zu befestigen, es ist aber nach vielen Versuchen gelungen." (19)

2) Unsere Abbildungen zeigen den Unterschied der Vierkant= wellen und der runden Wellen in schutztechnischer Hinsicht. Die Messer der Vierkantwelle, direkt durch Schrauben an der Welle befestigt, drehen sich mit ihrer nackten Schneide bei 3,800 bis 4,000 Umdrehungen in der Minute.

Das Wichtigste jedoch in schutztechnischer Hinsicht ist, daß die Messer gerade nur mit ihrer Schneide vorragen und daß diese Messer, da sie mit der Welle förmlich verwachsen sind, ganz dünn sein dürfen, ohne die Gefahr eines Bruches. (20)

The remarkable similarity of these two passages explains in part the uniquely macabre effect of "In der Strafkolonie", for Kafka describes the most fantastic and gruesome events in the prosaic terminology of industrial mechanics, events which are in addition imbued with religious significance. The combination of sadism and religion which Kafka postulates in "In der Strafkolonie" is as distasteful to the orthodox believer as it is to the rational humanist. One can therefore understand the indignation of those critics who regard any interpretation which draws an analogy between the Old Commandant and God as repugnant and absurd. Thus, for example, Roy Pascal writes: "One wavers between astonishment at the arbitrary interpretation and

abhorrence over the barbaric obscurantism of these critics who outdo Kierkegaard in regretting, apparently, that the God who asked Abraham to sacrifice his son was 'rationally liberal' enough to substitute a ram."(21) Two points must be made here: firstly, it is not the critic who "outdoes" Kierkegaard but Kafka, who, seeking confirmation of his sense of guilt, misinterpreted and distorted Kierkegaard's philosophy. Secondly, critics who suggest that Kafka exploited certain types of doctrine in order to sustain his own bad conscience, or that he regretted the mitigating influence of rational humanism upon the more extreme and oppressive theologies, are not so unique or outlandish in their interpretations as to be accused of "barbaric obscurantism". Nietzsche, it must be remembered, interpreted man's need for God in terms of inverted cruelty or spiritual masochism and would certainly have regarded the officer and the adherents of the Old Commandant as far from unique in their attitude to divine authority and to the whole question of human guilt. In "Zur Genealogie der Moral", he writes:

> Jener Wille zur Selbstpeinigung, jene zurückgetretene Grausamkeit des innerlich gemachten, in sich selbst zurück=gescheuchten Thiermenschen, . . . , der das schlechte Gewissen erfunden hat, um sich wehe zu thun, nachdem der natürlichere Ausweg dieses Wehe-thun-wollens verstopft war, - dieser Mensch des schlechten Gewissens hat sich der religiösen Voraussetzung bemächtigt, um seine Selbstmarterung bis zu ihrer schauerlichsten Härte und Schärfe zu treiben. Hier ist Krankheit, es ist kein Zweifel, die furchtbarste Krankheit, die bis jetzt im Menschen gewüthet hat. (22)

If Kafka was still under the influence of Nietzsche in 1914, or if his outlook was atheistic independently of influence - as we believe it was -

then he too was committed to the view that conscience is merely a device which man uses to torment himself, a "disease" which rationalism must cure. Thus he found himself, most unwillingly, on the side of Freud, who hoped to eliminate the sense of guilt by psychotherapy, and of Nietzsche who hoped to overcome it by his philosophy of the will. Yet here again Kafka was faced with a dilemma, for while his natural impulse was to cling to his bad conscience, reason dictated that he abandon it. In the figure of the explorer we are therefore justified in seeing Kafka himself for, like his creator, the explorer finds himself in a position where he must decide between the old and the new régimes. We have already described the old régime, but what of the new and its attitude to the Old Commandant and to the machine? Everything that the Old Commandant stood for, the New Commandant opposes. In the place of absolutism, barbaric cruelty and conservatism, he has put democracy, compassion and enlightened social reform; and these measures have been felt throughout the colony: the Old Commandant has no longer any true adherents; the statements of his former disciples are ambiguous and non-committal. With the demise of the Old Commandant, the apparatus of punishment has also fallen into a state of disrepair. There is no longer any rush to watch the execution of a condemned man. In the almost deserted valley the machine of conscience, now rendered obsolete by the "death of God", creaks for a time and eventually collapses. It fails to bring either enlightenment or redemption: "Das war ja keine Folter, wie sie der Offizier erreichen wollte, das war unmittelbarer Mord." Thus, humanism is the philosophy upon which the new order is founded. "Die alte Ordnung", writes Emrich, "hat für die Erlösung den Menschen geopfert. Die

neue Ordnung hat für den Menschen die Erlösung geopfert."(23)

It is between these two orders that the explorer must decide. His position is unenviable, for upon his shoulders there rests entirely the responsibility for committing the Old Commandant and the system of values which he represents to eternal oblivion. He stands between two diametrically opposed schools of thought, each of which hangs upon his every word, eager to interpret any chance remark as an attack upon the other side:

> Ein flüchtiges, ein bloß unvorsichtiges Wort genügt. Es muß gar nicht Ihrer Überzeugung entsprechen, wenn es nur scheinbar seinem Wunsche entgegenkommt. Sie werden etwa sagen: "Bei uns ist das Gerichtsverfahren ein anderes", oder "Bei uns wird der Angeklagte vor dem Urteil verhört", oder "Bei uns gibt es andere Strafen als Todesstrafen", oder "Bei uns gab es Folterungen nur im Mittelalter." Das alles sind Bemerkungen, die ebenso richtig sind, als sie Ihnen selbstverständlich erscheinen, unschuldige Bemerkungen, die mein Verfahren nicht antasten. (24)

One cannot but think in this whole connection of the unenviable position which science has occupied throughout the ages between theology and scepticism, of the way in which scientific pronouncements have been used, often simultaneously, as demonstrations of the existence or non-existence of God, of the authenticity or falsity of the Scriptures. Kafka may well have had this in mind when he wrote "In der Strafkolonie". On several occasions in the story the explorer is referred to as "ein großer Forscher des Abendlandes"; his power to influence proceedings in the penal colony is not compatible with that of an individual, but suggests that his approval or disapproval must represent not only his own verdict but also the verdict of

a greater and universally respected body of thought, of science. Further, the explorer is unwilling to take this responsibility upon his shoulders. He finds himself torn between admiration for the officer's conviction and horror at the obvious inhumanity of his methods, attempts to decry his own authority and power, and speaks of himself as "kein Kenner der gerichtlichen Verfahren". Thus, the man who had originally agreed to witness the execution merely out of politeness, now finds himself the unwilling pawn in a game in which his every pronouncement is likely to be taken out of context and used, against his will, to destroy traditional beliefs and procedures:

> Sie wollen eingreifen, Sie haben nicht das gesagt was er verkündet, Sie haben mein Verfahren nicht unmenschlich genannt, im Gegenteil, Ihrer tiefen Einsicht entsprechend, halten Sie es für das menschlichste und menschenwürdigste, Sie bewundern auch diese Maschinerie - aber es ist zu spät; Sie kommen gar nicht auf den Balkon, der schon voll Damen ist; Sie wollen sich bemerkbar machen; Sie wollen schreien; aber eine Damenhand hält Ihnen den Mund zu - und ich und das Werk des alten Kommandanten sind verloren. (25)

Kafka was, of course, familiar with the work of Darwin, whose "Origin of Species", though never intended as such, proved a powerful weapon in the hands of those intent upon discrediting the biblical account of the Creation. Darwin concluded his revolutionary work with the following statement of personal belief:

> I see no good reason why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of anyone. There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one. (26)

But whatever Darwin's intention or his personal conviction, the damage had been done. It was "too late".

It must be remembered, however, that we are dealing primarily with Kafka's personal dilemma, and that the analogy between explorer and scientist is of secondary importance. Ultimately, the explorer comes down on the side of the new régime. His condemnation of the injustice and cruelty of the old method of execution is unequivocal:

> Die Ungerechtigkeit des Verfahrens und die Unmenschlichkeit der Exekution war zweifellos. Die Antwort, die er zu geben hatte, war für den Reisenden von allem Anfang an zweifellos. "Ich bin ein Gegner dieses Verfahrens", sagte nun der Reisende. (27)

Yet if the explorer's statement is unambiguous, his feelings are not. His attitude to the officer and to the machine progresses from indifference to antipathy, from antipathy to uncertainty; and it is this uncertainty which most accurately reflects the author's own position. Kafka's dilemma is clear: while God lived, conscience - for Kafka a basically negative and destructive phenomenon - thrived; with the "death of God", conscience logically became obsolete. As an atheist Kafka found the former view unacceptable, but as a man preoccupied with personal guilt he found the latter intolerable. It was thus almost inevitable that he should revise the end of "In der Strafkolonie" in 1917, for by then he had managed to overcome his dilemma, by rejecting the Freudian and Nietzschean hypothesis that sin is an illusion and by elevating his sense of personal guilt to the religious level. In other words, Kafka came to regard himself as being, with all of mankind, under the curse of original sin. Thus, no longer committed to the rationalistic approach of 1914, he could whole-heartedly and openly approve the officer's dictum: "Die Schuld ist immer zweifellos".

Conclusion.

Written in 1914 and revised in 1917, "In der Strafkolonie" provides the connecting link between the two fundamental stages in Kafka's religious development: between the atheism of his early years and the search for faith that characterises his later works. Both versions of the story treat of the Nietzschean doctrine of the "death of God" and of the subsequent and inevitable decay of conscience. In the 1914 version Kafka unwillingly expresses support for the humanitarian ideals of the new rationalistic régime, in that he depicts the machine of conscience as an outmoded and obsolete form of torture that brings neither enlightenment nor salvation to its victims. In the revised version of 1917 a change in Kafka's religious position becomes apparent, since the officer, the sole advocate of the Old Commandant, returns, triumphant, from the grave. Kafka's religious position at this stage may thus be seen as similar to that of Kierkegaard, Barth and Martin Buber.

C H A P T E R VIII

Kafka's "Erzählungen".

In a letter to Max Brod, written in December 1917, Kafka described his novels as "künstlerisch mißlungene Arbeiten".(1) This condemnation of the longer works is partly an expression of his natural tendency to decry his own literary efforts, and partly the result of an accurate and objective assessment of "Amerika" and "Der Prozeß" (he had not at this time written "Das Schloß"). Kafka's attitude to the novels never changed. In the instructions which he gave to Brod shortly before his death he included them among the works which his friend and literary executor was to collect and destroy. The novels have, nevertheless, attracted far more critical attention than the short stories; but that is not necessarily a reflection on their relative literary value. The amount of criticism on any one work by Kafka has tended to be directly proportionate to its length and obscurity, to the challenge with which it presented the critic. Length and obscurity are, however, poor criteria by which to judge any literary work, and are particularly unsuitable in Kafka's case, for he was certainly less successful as a novelist than as a writer of short stories. His novels lack development and are repetitive, so that the reader soon finds himself suffering from a form of mental exhaustion not unlike that affecting the hero himself. The novels are not long, but they are <u>too</u> long. The material which was admirably suited to the short story proved insufficient for the novel. Any comparison of "Die Verwandlung" and "Der Prozeß" must make this evident. Great length is not necessarily a virtue, and Kafka was well aware of this:

> "Die Straße der Verlassenheit" von W. Fred. Wie werden solche Bücher geschrieben? Ein Mann, der im Kleinen Tüchtiges fertig bringt, dehnt hier sein Talent in einer so erbärmlichen

> Weise ins Große eines Romans aus, daß einem übel wird, selbst wenn man nicht vergißt, die Energie in der Mißhandlung des eigenen Talents zu bewundern. (2)

Kafka may not have "misused" his own talent, but it is possible that he was not entirely sure where that talent lay. As a writer of short stories he showed undeniable genius; as a novelist, he was certainly not so proficient, though no less remarkable.

Unfortunately, it seems easier to detect the faults in any work of art than to define its merits. Each of Kafka's short stories is, however, open to a variety of interpretations, none of which can be finally judged as right or wrong, provided that the critic's "translation" of his symbols has been consistent. Here, perhaps, we have an indication of the reason for their artistic superiority over the novels. The short stories are not so closely tied to specific events in the author's life; the autobiographical element is still present, but it is not limiting. There is room in these stories for the reader as well as for the author. Thus Charles Neider writes:

> Kafka's shorter fiction . . . bears the impress of his strange personality as thoroughly as do his novels. But the tales are usually more peripheral and less personal and suggestive than the novels. (3)

Yet if any one interpretation is to take precedence over the others, and is to be regarded as presenting the "real" meaning, then it can only be the author's own. We do not suggest therefore that the following interpretations are either final or necessary, but rather that this is probably what

Kafka intended when he wrote the works.

Two Autobiographical Fragments

"Der Riesenmaulwurf", 1914

"Blumfeld, ein älterer Junggeselle", 1914(?)

"Der Riesenmaulwurf".

Kafka began work on "Der Riesenmaulwurf" in December 1914, but abandoned the story less than a month later. The evidence for this can be found in diary-entries for December 19th, 1914 and January 6th, 1915. Brod is therefore mistaken when he suggests in his postscript to the "Erzählungen" that the story belongs to the post-war years and shows signs characteristic of the author's last period.(4) It is clearly important when dealing with Kafka's "Erzählungen" to establish the correct date of each work, since most of the stories allow of more than one interpretation and since the critic's task is not made easier by uncertainty as to the time of composition. Brod later corrected the mistake in his Biography of Kafka, but at least one critic seems to have based his interpretation on the assumption that the story was written in 1918 or later. Günther Anders suggests that "Der Riesenmaulwurf" provides the reader with an example of Kafka's unorthodox or outsider's view of the Jewish religion, that the mole can be taken to represent the Jewish god and that the central issue in the story is the relationship between the orthodox East-European Jew and the assimilated "Scheinjude" of the West (the village schoolmaster and the narrator respectively in the story). He thus sees the story as depicting the resentment felt by

the Eastern Jew for his culturally and economically superior, but religiously inferior Western counterpart.(5) Kafka was not unaware of this resentment, but it constituted a major problem for him at only two points in his life - in 1911, with the arrival in Prague of the East-European Yiddish acting troupe, and during the last years of his life when he became interested in Zionism. "Der Riesenmaulwurf" was not written during either of these periods. This, and the apparently macabre choice of a mole to symbolise God, seems to make Anders' interpretation somewhat unconvincing. References to moles naturally do not appear frequently in Kafka's diaries, but this extract from a letter which he wrote to Oskar Pollak in 1903 does shed some light on the subject:

> Einsiedelei ist widerlich, man lege seine Eier ehrlich vor aller Welt, die Sonne wird sie ausbrüten, man beiße lieber ins Leben statt in die Zunge; man ehre den Maulwurf und seine Art, aber man mache ihn nicht zu seinem Heiligen. (6)

Anders might be seen as having disregarded this last piece of advice. The burrowing, hibernating mole, hidden away in his "fortress" beneath the ground, seems better adapted to serve as a symbol for the hermit or recluse than for God. But here we are dealing not with any ordinary mole, but with a giant of the species and thus, if our analogy is correct, with some remarkably asocial being, with the artist perhaps, or even with Kafka himself. Such "mole-like" artists - German Jews, introverted and apart - were nurtured and fostered by the unique intellectual, social and political atmosphere of Prague in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Faced with the hostile Czech world, they retreated into their "burrow", their voluntary ghetto:

> "Die Erde ist doch in Ihrer Gegend besonders schwarz und schwer. Nun, sie gibt deshalb auch den Maulwürfen besonders fette Nahrung und sie werden ungewöhnlich groß." "Aber so groß doch nicht", rief der Lehrer und maß, in seiner Wut ein wenig übertreibend, zwei Meter an der Wand ab. (7)

Since an average mole measures only six inches, this is indeed a remarkable phenomenon. Kafka is almost certainly making a private joke here, caricaturing his own mental and physical state, his introspection and his bodily height. Throughout his life Kafka was embarrassed by the sheer length of his body; and this embarrassment gradually developed into an obsession. He walked with his head bent forward and cultivated a stoop in order to minimise the impression of height. Many of his sketches are of thin, angular figures with enormously long legs, completely disproportionate to the rest of their bodies. In 1911, he wrote in his diaries:

> Mein Körper ist zu lang für seine Schwäche ... Wie soll das schwache Herz, das mich in der letzten Zeit öfters gestochen hat, das Blut über die ganze Länge dieser Beine hin stoßen können. Bis zum Knie wäre genug Arbeit, dann aber wird es nur noch mit Greisenkraft in die kalten Unterschenkel gespült. ... Durch die Länge des Körpers ist alles auseinandergezogen. (8)

Having established that the mole represents Kafka the artist, Kafka the recluse, or indeed Kafka in all those unusual aspects in which he was a "giant", we must now admit that the mole is not really the subject of the story at all. Kafka originally entitled the work "Der Dorfschullehrer", a title which gives a more accurate indication of its theme: the relationship

between the narrator and the village schoolteacher after the former has published his scientific paper on the giant mole. The story is remarkable in that it is a comment upon itself, for just as the giant mole is only technically its theme, so too the giant mole is only technically the subject of the narrator's pamphlet. An analogy may thus be drawn between Kafka's writing and this pamphlet. Referring to the whole affair of the giant mole, Kafka writes: "hätte man es nicht förmlich gestoßen, es hätte sich nicht verbreitet".(9) The man responsible for giving Kafka's writing "a shove" was, of course, Max Brod. In February 1907, before any of Kafka's works had been published, Brod was already mentioning his name in "Die Gegenwart" (a Berlin weekly) alongside such prominent authors as Blei, Mann, Wedekind and Meyrink. There can be no doubt that Brod "promoted" Kafka and that the latter was not entirely pleased that his work was being thrust upon the public. Brod himself writes:

> Ich hatte sofort den Eindruck, daß hier keine gewöhnliche Begabung, sondern ein Genie sprach. Von da an begannen meine Bemühungen, die Werke Kafkas in die Öffentlichkeit zu bringen, - ein Streben, das in mir übermächtig war und gegen das ich auch gar nicht ankämpfte, da ich es für richtig und natürlich hielt. Franz sträubte sich, manchmal stärker, manchmal schwächer, manchmal auch gar nicht; ... (10)

Later in the story Kafka alludes again to his unwillingness to have his works published and to Brod's repeated attempts to dissuade him from hiding his light under a bushel:

> Auf dem Tisch hatte ich alle Exemplare meiner Schrift, so viele ich ihrer noch besaß, aufgehäuft. Es fehlten nur sehr

> wenige, denn ich hatte in der letzten Zeit durch ein Rund=schreiben alle ausgeschickten Exemplare zurückgefordert und hatte auch die meisten erhalten. ... Nur einer bat mich, die Schrift als Kuriosum behalten zu dürfen, und verpflichtete sich, sie im Sinne meines Rundschreibens während der nächsten zwanzig Jahre niemandem zu zeigen. (11)

One is tempted to regard these words as prophetic. Kafka left no will, but in a private letter to Brod, written shortly before his death, he specifically stated that his published works, as well as his manuscripts and private correspondence, were, with certain exceptions, to be collected and destroyed and that under no circumstances was anything further to be published. The letter ended: "Briefe, die man Dir nicht übergeben will, soll man wenigstens selbst zu verbrennen sich verpflichten."(12)

Kafka never explicitly stated his reasons for wanting the works destroyed. That he had doubts about the literary value of much that he had written is certain, but this seems an insufficient reason for the drastic steps which he expected his literary executor to take. It is more probable that Kafka had put more of himself into the works than he wished the public to see, a case perhaps of not wanting to "wash one's dirty linen in public". In a conversation with Gustav Janouch he said:

> Max Brod, Felix Weltsch, alle meine Freunde bemächtigen sich immer irgendeiner Sache, die ich geschrieben habe, und überraschen mich dann mit dem fertigen Verlagsvertrag. Ich will ihnen keine Unannehmlichkeiten bereiten, und so kommt es zum Schluß zur Herausgabe von Dingen, die eigentlich nur ganz private Aufzeichnungen oder Spielereien sind. Persönliche Belege meiner menschlichen Schwäche werden gedruckt und sogar verkauft, weil meine Freunde, mit Max Brod an der Spitze, es

> sich in den Kopf gesetzt haben, daraus Literatur zu machen, und ich nicht die Kraft besitze, diese Zeugnisse der Einsamkeit zu vernichten. (13)

"Diese Zeugnisse der Einsamkeit" seems further to support the mole-recluse analogy, and it is for "ganz private" reasons that the narrator of "Der Riesenmaulwurf" withdraws his pamphlet.

One person who might well have taken exception to Kafka's stories was, of course, Hermann Kafka. With this in mind it will perhaps prove useful to give a brief synopsis of the rest of "Der Riesenmaulwurf". The true discoverer of the giant mole was not the narrator, but the old schoolteacher. For some time, however, the latter's work has received little recognition in scientific circles. Incensed by the injustice of this, the narrator, a business man, sets out to defend the village schoolteacher, by himself proving the existence of the mole. But, as he himself admits, he is less concerned with the main object of proving that the giant mole has actually been seen, than with defending the old teacher's honesty. But the plan misfires, for the pamphlet is apparently so ambiguous that the old teacher regards it as an insidious attack, rather than a defence:

> Vor allem wies er öfters darauf hin, daß alle seine bisherigen Gegner ihre Gegnerschaft überhaupt nicht oder bloß unter vier Augen oder wenigstens nur mündlich gezeigt hätten, während ich es für nötig gehalten hätte, alle meine Aussetzungen sofort drucken zu lassen. (14)

It would clearly be far-fetched to suggest that Hermann Kafka "discovered" his son or ever wrote any work claiming to have done so. It is certain, however, that he "discovered" <u>elements</u> in his son, and indeed in

all his children, which he did not like and that he "published" his discovery openly, at least in the sense of making it public. In the "Brief an den Vater" Kafka writes:

> Ganz unverträglich mit dieser Stellung zu Deinen Kindern schien es zu sein, wenn Du, was ja sehr oft geschah, öffentlich Dich beklagtest. (15)

Further, what Hermann Kafka complained of was not deliberate malice on the part of his son, but coldness, estrangement and ingratitude; he found him unsociable:

> ... statt dessen habe ich mich seit jeher vor Dir verkrochen, in mein Zimmer, zu Büchern, zu verrückten Freunden, zu überspannten Ideen ... (16)

It is clear that, in his writing, Kafka continued where his father had left off, and that he had, in a sense, "defended his father's honesty". That the majority of Kafka's works take the form of complaints against himself is beyond doubt. But, whatever Kafka's intention, the early works were anything but a defence of his father. At best, one could describe them as ambiguous, for if the sons in "Das Urteil", "Die Verwandlung" and "Amerika" accept the condemnation of the fathers, the fathers' actions are not justified, at least in the reader's mind, by this acceptance. What purported to be a justification turned out, in fact, to be an insidious attack. Hermann Kafka might well have felt that while his previous enemies had shown their hostility either not at all or in private, his son had considered it necessary, "[seine] Aussetzungen sofort drucken zu lassen".

"Der Riesenmaulwurf" may thus be seen as a comment by Kafka on the effect which his writing had upon his relationship with his father. Paradoxically, the mole is the least important element in the story, for it is not it but the narrator's pamphlet which causes the breach between him and the village schoolteacher. Parallels may thus be drawn between the mole story and both "Das Urteil" and "Der Heizer". In "Der Riesenmaulwurf" the village schoolteacher uses the narrator's pamphlet as a weapon against him. Kafka himself gives a very similar interpretation of "Das Urteil". In the course of the story the father uses the common bond of the friend (the writing self) to set himself up as Georg's antagonist:

> Die Entwicklung der Geschichte zeigt nun, wie aus dem Gemeinsamen, dem Freund, der Vater hervorsteigt und sich als Gegensatz Georg gegenüber aufstellt ... (17)

"Der Riesenmaulwurf" ends with a discussion between the old schoolteacher and the narrator in which the latter admits that his pamphlet has had an unfortunate effect and agrees to withdraw entirely from the whole affair. In the course of the discussion, he makes the following observation to himself:

> Die meisten alten Leute haben Jüngeren gegenüber etwas Täuschendes, etwas Lügnerisches in ihrem Wesen, man lebt ruhig neben ihnen fort, glaubt das Verhältnis gesichert, kennt die vorherrschenden Meinungen, bekommt fortwährend Bestätigungen des Friedens, hält alles für selbstverständlich und plötzlich, wenn sich doch etwas Entscheidendes ereignet und die so lange vorbereitete Ruhe wirken sollte, erheben sich diese alten Leute wie Fremde, haben tiefere, stärkere Meinungen, entfalten förmlich jetzt erst ihre Fahne und man liest darauf mit Schrecken den neuen Spruch. (18)

This is exactly what happens in "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung". It is remarkable that in a work in which he apparently intended to show some regret for having censured his father in these early stories, Kafka should have reiterated the very views which must have caused offence at the time.

"Blumfeld, ein älterer Junggeselle".

"Blumfeld, ein älterer Junggeselle" is one of Kafka's most delightful and light-hearted short stories. Its date of composition cannot be established with any certainty, but the theme, the loneliness of the bachelor, suggests that the work was probably written before 1917 and perhaps as early as 1912. The story is, on the whole, fairly unproblematical, and dissension in critical circles has been restricted to minor points of interpretation.

The bachelor theme recurs throughout Kafka's works. All of his heroes are bachelors, and Heinz Politzer has gone so far as to suggest that Kafka's entire work can be interpreted in terms of his personal experience as an unmarried man.(19) Blumfeld is a typical example of the Kafka bachelor and, as such, resembles in general terms both Samsa and Josef K. His life is formalised and dominated by routine; he has neither family nor friends and has repressed the desire for both, apparently successfully; he lives alone in a single room and is cared for by an elderly landlady whom he is more inclined to abuse than to treat as a friend. In the opening paragraph we find Blumfeld, having returned home after a laborious days's work, climbing the stairs to his lonely apartment. Kafka seems to have regarded this scene as particularly poignant, for he uses it again in the sketch "Das Unglück des Junggesellen". Certainly, Blumfeld presents an unhappy sight, but the

fault is entirely his own, for in his formalised, carefully planned existence, he has left no room for human relationships, and indeed no room for emotion at all. His position is thus exactly parallel to that of Josef K., but while the hero of "Der Prozeß" was guilty of "Lieblosigkeit", Blumfeld is suffering from it. This is the essential difference between the two works. In both, the course of the hero's life is disturbed by a fantastic event, by the intrusion of an unexplained but powerful force, but in the "Blumfeld" story, the question of guilt does not really arise. Not only is the hero not executed, but he actually manages to outwit the intruders, an outcome which would be quite inconceivable in "Der Prozeß". Kafka has again made full use of the Freudian theory of "the return of the repressed", but that he presents his hero with two bouncing celluloid balls rather than with two black-coated warders is in itself suggestive of the more cheerful atmosphere of the short story. It is interesting that, having introduced his hero to his two new companions, Kafka writes: "das ist ja Zauberei" - a word more appropriate to a fairy-tale than to Kafka's usual oppressive nightmares.

The disintegration of Blumfeld's secure, unemotional existence is heralded by the sense of discontent which he feels on the particular evening when he returns home from work. He has begun to find the lonely, bachelor existence unpleasant, for the need for companionship, against which he has successfully struggled in the past, is now making itself felt:

> Irgendein Begleiter, irgendein Zuschauer für diese Tätigkeiten wäre Blumfeld sehr willkommen gewesen. Er hatte schon überlegt, ob er sich nicht einen kleinen Hund anschaffen solle. (20)

Yet Blumfeld's attitude to this prospective companion is symptomatic of his entire attitude to life: it is utilitarian. He needs a companion, as Josef K. needs his mistress Elsa. The dog will fulfil the function of providing Blumfeld with companionship when, and only when, he feels the need for it. His speculations upon the advantages and disadvantages of keeping a dog remind one of Kafka's summary of the pros and cons of marriage and his eventual decision not to buy a dog is determined by exactly the same considerations. Blumfeld, like Rilke, fears a binding relationship, even with a dog. He seeks the advantages of companionship, but is not prepared to make any personal sacrifice in order to enjoy these advantages. A dog, like a human being, will expect some return for its loyalty and affection, and Blumfeld is either unwilling to make this return, or is incapable of doing so. Thus, since he finds it impracticable to keep a dog, he represses the idea once more:

> Blumfeld dagegen will nur einen Begleiter haben, ein Tier, um das er sich nicht viel kümmern muß, dem ein gelegentlicher Fußtritt nicht schadet, das im Notfall auch auf der Gasse übernachten kann, das aber, wenn es Blumfeld danach verlangt, gleich mit Bellen, Springen, Händelecken zur Verfügung steht. Etwas derartiges will Blumfeld, da er es aber, wie er einsieht, ohne allzugroße Nachteile nicht haben kann, so verzichtet er darauf. (21)

It is at this point that Blumfeld opens the door to his room and is confronted by the two bouncing balls. It is clear that the balls fulfil exactly the function which Blumfeld had required of the dog. They provide companionship, but without the necessity of a binding or demanding relationship.

It is really of very little importance whether one interprets their function in metaphysical or in psychological terms. The nett result remains the same. Whether the balls are ambassadors from his soul itself, as Tauber suggests,(22) or projections of his repressed desire for companionship, they present Blumfeld with a sphere of reality which he has deliberately neglected, and offer him the opportunity of making amends. But like both Gregor Samsa and Josef K., Blumfeld fails to understand the meaning of the fantastic situation with which he is confronted. The process of repression has been too successful. He regards the balls as something alien, and their presence as an unwelcome intrusion, upsetting the strict pattern of his life. Blumfeld is a victim of the processes of sophistication; his emotions have become deadened, anaesthetised:

> Schade, daß Blumfeld nicht ein kleines Kind ist, zwei solche Bälle wären für ihn eine freudige Überraschung gewesen, während jetzt das Ganze einen mehr unangenehmen Eindruck auf ihn macht. (23)

In the pages which follow Blumfeld proceeds through exactly the same mental stages as Samsa and Josef K. He tries to understand the balls, to ignore them, to forget them, and even, like Gregor Samsa, to sleep off the whole affair. But Blumfeld too suffers from "uneasy dreams", and in the morning the balls are still there. Finally, he succeeds in trapping them in the wardrobe. They have been, quite literally, "repressed".

Kafka devotes the second half of his narrative to a description of the hero's place of work. Blumfeld again appears as a Samsa-like figure: overconscientious, overworked, and underestimated by his employers. Kafka

seems to have had his father's business in mind when he wrote this sketch, a further indication that the work may have been written as early as 1912. Blumfeld is employed in a "Fabrik für die Herstellung gewisser feinerer Waren", while Hermann Kafka was engaged in wholesale trading in "Galanteriewaren". Both Kafka's personal sufferings in his father's factory in 1911, and those of the other employees, are reflected in the story. But if there is social criticism here, it is of a very mild nature. Kafka does not suggest that factory work has a permanently dehumanising effect, but that people are unhappier during their working hours than when they are free from the tedium of daily employment. It is perhaps more truly a comment upon human nature than upon capitalist victimisation. There is surely a touch of irony in the words: "Auf der Gasse war er frisch, aber die Nähe der Arbeit macht ihn müde."(24)

It is unfortunate that Kafka failed to complete the story of Blumfeld and the bouncing balls for, as it stands, the second half of the narrative tends to detract from the first. The reader is left puzzling about the rôle which Blumfeld's work plays in the story, when, in fact, the theme has been fully and adequately treated in the first half of the narrative. The theme is the loneliness of the bachelor, but it is also the unhappiness of the childless man. Among the many fragments collected from Kafka's notebooks and loose pages there appears the following sketch:

> Auf der Freitreppe der Kirche treiben sich die Kinder herum wie auf einem Spielplatz und rufen einander unanständige Redensarten zu, die sie natürlich nicht verstehen können und an denen sie nur saugen, wie Säuglinge am Lutscher. Der Geistliche kommt heraus, streicht hinten die Kutte glatt und

setzt sich auf eine Stufe. Es liegt ihm daran, die Kinder zu beruhigen, denn ihr Geschrei ist auch in der Kirche zu hören. Es gelingt ihm aber nur hie und da, ein Kind an sich zu ziehen, die Menge entweicht ihm immer wieder und spielt weiter unbekümmert um ihn. Den Sinn dieses Spieles kann er nicht erkennen, auch nicht den entferntesten kindlichen Sinn sieht er. Wie Spielbälle, die man gegen den Boden schlägt, so hüpfen sie unermüdlich und scheinbar ohne Anstrengung auf allen Stufen und haben keine Verbindung miteinander als jene Zurufe, es ist einschläfernd. (25)

"Deus Absconditus" : The Problem of Faith

"Eine kaiserliche Botschaft"	)	
"Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer"	)	
"Die Abweisung"	)	1918 - 1922
"Zur Frage der Gesetze"	)	

The four works listed above were written between 1918 and 1922 and belong thematically to the short-story-cycle "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer". Kafka, as we have seen in Chapter VI, had by this time rejected the Nietzschean conception of the "death of God" and was attempting to overcome his natural scepticism, to make the leap of faith. Yet if he had abandoned his atheism, he had not undergone any form of religious conversion or had any dramatic religious "experience". One might say that he temporarily suspended his disbelief and that in a remarkably paradoxical fashion, he "sincerely pretended" that he believed. Pascal may have had such a suspension of disbelief in mind when he spoke of the "wager" of faith. Kafka seems to be in the position of a man who, having summoned up all his

energies, is for one very brief moment able to say to God: "I do not disbelieve. Let me believe!" But the tragedy of his position is that his last years consist entirely of such moments, that his prayer is never answered and that he remains, so to speak, constantly suspended between belief and disbelief, or, more accurately, between belief and nothing.

Can one continue to believe in a silent god, in a god who never manifests himself, and who, in consequence, denies to man all understanding of the purpose of life, of his purpose? This is the question which Kafka poses in the cycle "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer". His reply, however persistant, is "yes". For Kafka, God remains inaccessible, but, in explaining this inaccessibility - to himself more than to others - he comes closer to orthodox theology, and in particular to Pascal, than to Nietzsche. God is not dead, but hidden, alienated from man since the Fall. He is the "Deus Absconditus" of Pascal's "Pensées". If his purpose remains obscure, his voice unheard, it is because there is a gap between God and man which can no longer be bridged. This is the theme of the parable "Eine kaiserliche Botschaft":

> Es gibt eine Sage, die dieses Verhältnis gut ausdrückt. Der Kaiser, so heißt es, hat Dir, dem Einzelnen, dem jämmerlichen Untertanen, dem winzig vor der kaiserlichen Sonne in die fernste Ferne geflüchteten Schatten, gerade Dir hat der Kaiser von seinem Sterbebett aus eine Botschaft gesendet. (26)

Yet such is the distance between the Emperor and his subject that the message can never arrive. The messenger does not even reach the outermost gate of the imperial palace. The humble subject waits in vain, and dreams that the impossible may some day happen:

> Du aber sitzt an Deinem Fenster und erträumst sie Dir, wenn der Abend kommt. (27)

"Eine kaiserliche Botschaft", though published separately in the volume "Erzählungen", is actually included in the story "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer". The situation which, according to Kafka, "the parable describes very well", is thus that of the wall-builders in relation to their Emperor. For these men the Emperor remains utterly remote; they do not know which Emperor is reigning and have doubts even regarding the name of the dynasty:

> Wenn man aus solchen Erscheinungen folgern wollte, daß wir im Grunde gar keinen Kaiser haben, wäre man von der Wahrheit nicht weit entfernt. (28)

Kafka seems to allude here to his former belief that God was dead, but if "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" has any moral, it is certainly not that one should call God's existence or his law into question, but that man must learn to accept that his understanding is, and must remain, limited and that God is infinitely wiser than he himself:

> ... die Führerschaft ... kennt uns. Sie, die ungeheuere Sorgen wälzt, weiß von uns, kennt unser kleines Gewerbe, sieht uns alle zusammensitzen in der niedrigen Hütte und das Gebet, das der Hausvater am Abend im Kreise der Seinigen sagt, ist ihr wohlgefällig oder mißfällt ihr. (29)

Kafka's description of the deity is traditional to the point of being stylised, but this is entirely in keeping with his own situation and with that of the wall-builders in the story. Where there is no personal

relationship, man must rely solely upon tradition, upon the evidence of legend or perhaps upon a preformed theology.

"Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" falls naturally into two parts, the second dealing almost entirely with the problem discussed above: the remoteness of the Emperor, the people's uncertainty about his nature and even his existence, the difficulty involved in obtaining definite information about him due to the vastness of the land, etc. Yet in spite of the confusion surrounding the Emperor, the building of the wall continues. In the first part of the story, Kafka discusses the actual method of its construction and the attitude of the builders to their task. Whatever the purpose of the Great Wall, it is certain that its building was originally decreed by the High Command, and that the High Command has existed from all eternity. Indeed, from the builders' point of view, the sole reason for the wall's existence seems to be that its building <u>was</u> decreed by the High Command, for there is no longer any certainty as to its purpose or usefulness; its sole function seems to be to keep the builders active. It is thus not unnatural that the workers should fall prey to a sense of futility, to impatience and lethargy in the face of this enormous and apparently pointless task, and for this reason the High Command has appointed that the wall shall be constructed in a piecemeal fashion rather than in an unbroken line. The workers are thus able to enjoy a sense of purpose and of achievement, for while they could not conceive of the wall in its entirety, let alone hope to witness its completion, the building of an individual section is well within their understanding and ability. It is, admittedly, a compromise, but a satisfactory one.

Just as man, through sin, alienated himself from God, and destroyed the direct, personal relationship which had existed between him and his creator, so too he was responsible for the position of compromise in which he found himself after the Fall. Since the Fall, man has had piecemeal understanding; he has been aware of a divine purpose, but incapable of conceiving it in its entirety. His desire for understanding is infinite, but his capacity to understand is restricted by the finite nature of his mind: "Kafka", writes Nahum N. Glatzer, "understands man's peculiar position as resulting from the fact that he has eaten from the Tree of Knowledge but was prevented from eating of the Tree of Life."(30) In Part I of Goethe's "Faust", Mephistopheles speaks contemptuously of human reason:

> Der kleine Gott der Welt bleibt stets vom gleichen Schlag
> Und ist so wunderlich als wie am ersten Tag.
> Ein wenig besser würd er leben,
> Hätt'st du ihm nicht den Schein des Himmelslichts gegeben;
> Er nennt's Vernunft und braucht's allein,
> Nur tierischer als jedes Tier zu sein. (31)

Kafka, on the other hand, seems to suggest that the fragmentary nature of human understanding is not really a curse, but a necessary part of God's plan: "Bleibt also nur die Folgerung, daß die Führerschaft den Teilbau <u>beabsichtigte</u>."(32) Perfect understanding is denied to man but a degree of insight is necessary to prevent him from becoming totally discouraged and falling into a state of indolence. In the third aphorism, Kafka writes:

> Es gibt zwei menschliche Hauptsünden, aus welchen sich alle andern ableiten: Ungeduld und Lässigkeit. Wegen der

> Ungeduld sind sie aus dem Paradiese vertrieben worden, wegen der Lässigkeit kehren sie nicht zurück. (32a)

Orthodox theologians would probably suggest that Adam's sin was pride, rather than impatience, that he was expelled from Paradise because, in eating of the Tree of Knowledge, he presumed to set himself on a par with his Creator. The word "Ungeduld" does, however, suggest discontent, rebelliousness and lack of humility, so that Kafka's interpretation of the Fall is not radically unorthodox. That there is some connection between the wall and human aspiration is clear from a suggestion which is made in the course of the narrative, that the wall was once considered as a possible foundation for the second Tower of Babel. But Kafka quickly dismisses this suggestion as absurd: no one could build a tower upon such incomplete foundations. Here, as throughout the cycle "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer", we see the opponent of atheism, scepticism, and all philosophies of doubt; but Kafka is struggling less on behalf of religion than to ward off his own ever-present disbelief.

Kafka, as we have seen, regards "Lässigkeit" as the second principal sin. Sloth is, of course, one of the seven cardinal sins and would seem to imply not only physical lethargy but disheartenment in the face of the laborious task of living in accord with God's will. Indeed, the dangers of sloth seem even greater than those of impatience. Impatience produces activity, which is not only desirable but is a prerequisite to salvation; but while activity may go beyond its proper bounds and <u>become</u> a sin, sloth is <u>always</u> sinful. One is reminded here of Goethe's famous words in Part II of "Faust":

Wer immer strebend sich bemüht
Den können wir erlösen. (33)

- and of Mephistopheles' part in the divine purpose, which is to goad man out of his lethargy. Although there is no Mephistophelean figure in "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer", impatience, sloth and disheartenment are the great dangers, for the task of completing the wall is not only laborious but completely beyond human capability and understanding. Yet these dangers were foreseen by the High Command, which realised that the builders of the wall would be sustained in their efforts by the satisfaction of being able to witness the completion of minor sections of the wall, and thus of forming some picture of the magnificent structure in its entirety. Hence the system of piecemeal construction.

Thus, in spite of all discouragements, the workers continue to strive. There is, however, no suggestion that this striving will be rewarded. One may hope for grace, but one cannot expect it. But for Kafka, hope and hopelessness go hand in hand: "Genau so, so hoffnungslos und hoffnungsvoll, sieht unser Volk den Kaiser."(34) Kafka's "Deus Absconditus" is so completely hidden that, as we have seen, it is a natural error to confuse him with the dead. Prayer meets only with silence, and there is no longer any certainty as to the nature and purpose of God's law. These would seem to be the themes of "Die Abweisung" and of "Zur Frage der Gesetze" respectively.

In the former work, the petitions of the townspeople are invariably rejected by the officials. But this rejection has itself become an integral part of the people's lives, more acceptable and reassuring than any acceptance.

Indeed, the people seem to fear acceptance, as if it were a great misfortune, for that the petition will be rejected is the only certainty in their lives. They hold to this certainty and yet continue to present their petitions. Kafka seems to suggest, on the basis of his own experience, that, although prayer is never answered, it is nonetheless an integral part of spiritual life. There is a certainty and a comfort in having one's requests constantly refused, since these refusals reflect, perhaps, the greater wisdom of God. The act of praying has a value per se; it is not merely an empty formality:

> In wichtigen Angelegenheiten aber kann die Bürgerschaft einer Abweisung immer sicher sein. Und nun ist es eben so merkwürdig, daß man ohne diese Abweisung gewissermaßen nicht auskommen kann, und dabei ist dieses Hingehn und Abholen der Abweisung durchaus keine Formalität. Immer wieder frisch und ernst geht man hin und geht dann wieder von dort, allerdings nicht geradezu gekräftigt und beglückt, aber doch auch gar nicht enttäuscht und müde. Ich muß mich bei niemandem nach diesen Dingen erkundigen, ich fühle es in mir selbst wie alle. Und nicht einmal eine gewisse Neugierde, den Zusammenhängen dieser Dinge nachzuforschen." (35)

"Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" was written, as we have said, between 1918 and 1922. It is clear that during this period, Kafka's religious outlook underwent a considerable transformation. In March 1918, he wrote of Kierkegaard: "Den gewöhnlichen Menschen (mit dem er übrigens merkwürdigerweise so gut sich zu unterhalten verstand) sieht er nicht und malt den ungeheueren Abraham in die Wolken."(36) That Kafka associates

himself here with the "gewöhnlichen Menschen" is beyond doubt. Kierkegaard's Abraham, his "Knight of Faith", has become for him an "awful" figure, in the literal meaning of the word. His standards, the standards against which Kafka had measured himself in 1917, have become too high, too demanding. Kafka has become more human, or at least more sympathetic towards the human position. He is more on man's side. His religious idealism, his unconditional commitment to the theologies of Kierkegaard and Buber, has been tempered by a personal experience of the great difficulties involved in leading a truly religious life and in making the leap of faith. He has not lowered his standards, but come to recognise his own limitations. He is content to build only a section of the wall. His theology, too, has become more orthodox, a sign, perhaps, of his greater humility, of his increased awareness that he was incapable of being spiritually self-reliant, that he needed guidance and support. Although he could change the end of "In der Strafkolonie" in 1917, Kafka could not bring God back to life. To all intents and purposes God is as dead in "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" as the Old Commandant in "In der Strafkolonie". Kafka had suspended his disbelief, but God seemed indifferent to the effort which he made in doing so. If he were to go on believing at all, Kafka needed to understand why this was so and how he could continue living under such circumstances. He thus turned to orthodox theology and found the answers readily to hand. In "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" both questions and answers appear. Where a rational explanation of any phenomenon is possible, it is given by the narrator, not dogmatically, but in relation to other explanations, legendary and traditional. Finally, all attempts to explain, or even to understand, are shown to be insufficient. There remains an element which must be

accepted in faith:

> Suche mit allen deinen Kräften die Anordnungen der Führerschaft zu verstehen, aber nur bis zu einer bestimmten Grenze, dann höre mit dem Nachdenken auf. Ein sehr vernünftiger Grundsatz ... (37)

Brief notes on short stories and fragments from various periods.

Three humorous autobiographical sketches.

"Der Kübelreiter", 1917)
"Die Sorge des Hausvaters") 1917 - 1919.
"Ein Bericht für eine Akademie")

In the introduction to this chapter we suggested that most of Kafka's short stories were open to a variety of interpretations, none of which could conclusively be shown to be either correct or incorrect. It is nonetheless true that many of these interpretations, although they cannot be dismissed out of hand, are improbable if not utterly extravagant. Many of Kafka's fragments are only a few pages long; yet upon such slight foundations grandiose metaphysical constructions are built, producing an effect which can only be described as grotesque. Thus, for example, Emrich can devote five pages of his book to Kafka's two-page sketch "Die Sorge des Hausvaters" and conclude:

> In Odradek wird also in der Tat eine äußerste Möglichkeit des Kafkaschen Weltbildes ansichtig; es gibt ein universell Abgeschlossenes, ein Unsterbliches mitten im Sterblichen. Es ist Ding und zugleich nicht-Ding, Mensch und zugleich nicht-Mensch. Es redet und entzieht sich aller deutenden Rede. Es

> ist pures Ding und doch allen Dingen und Dingordnungen entrückt. Universell überspannt es die Trennung zwischen Geist und Stoff, Denken und Dasein, ist beides in einem. Aber nur durch die Grenzüberschreitung beider, durch Überschreitung der Sphäre des Geistes und durch Überschreitung der Sphäre des Stoffes, wird es existent und "wirklich". Indem es beide Sphären verläßt, wird es abgeschlossenes Ganzes. (38)

Neider and Tauber also attribute a "higher meaning" to Odradek, though they cannot be credited with quite such a profusion of abstract nouns as Emrich. Neider sees Odradek as a symbol of life, "immortal and elusive",(39) while Tauber, who finds religious significance in everything that Kafka wrote, talks of original sin, the "Corruptio imaginis dei".(40) These critics are either taking themselves or Kafka too seriously. They deny humour to Kafka and are thus committed to finding "deeper meaning" in all of his works. Each of the three works to be discussed in this section is an autobiographical sketch in which Kafka's intention is almost certainly humorous.

"Der Kübelreiter".

"Der Kübelreiter" is a delightful four-page phantasy which Kafka composed during the winter of 1917-18, when Prague was burdened with a particularly severe shortage of coal. The narrator, suffering from the intense cold, decides to make one last attempt to persuade the coal-merchant to supply him with fuel. He then rides off on his bucket which, owing to its emptiness, is so light that it can fly through the air. His journey is wasted, however, since he is apparently invisible to both the coal-merchant and his wife - it is, after all, only a flight of fancy - and he ascends

into the regions of the ice mountains and is lost for ever.

There is really nothing more to be said. Around an everyday event Kafka has built a fairy-tale not unworthy of the brothers Grimm, with ice mountains, magic and all. To interpret this little sketch in terms of conscience, as Neider does, or in any terms whatsoever is merely to spoil it.

"Die Sorge des Hausvaters".

We have already seen to what lengths of absurdity the major Kafka critics have gone in interpreting this two-page sketch. For those whose interests lay in etymology, however, the work presented a particular challenge and a host of interpretations has appeared based solely on the "meaning" of the word Odradek. And yet, in the sketch itself, we find the following observation:

> Die einen sagen, das Wort Odradek stamme aus dem Slawischen und sie suchen auf Grund dessen die Bildung des Wortes nachzu= weisen. Andere wieder meinen, es stamme aus dem Deutschen, vom Slawischen sei es nur beeinflußt. Die Unsicherheit beider Deutungen aber läßt wohl mit Recht darauf schließen, daß keine zutrifft, zumal man auch mit keiner von ihnen einen Sinn des Wortes finden kann. (41)

Odradek has, however, two essential qualities, meaninglessness and uselessness; and these are qualities which Kafka, in his more light-heartedly masochistic moods, would have attributed to himself. A further "clue" is provided by the object's appearance:

> Es sieht zunächst aus wie eine flache sternartige Zwirn= spule, und tatsächlich scheint es auch mit Zwirn bezogen;

> allerdings dürften es nur abgerissene, alte, aneinander=geknotete, aber auch ineinanderverfitzte Zwirnstücke von verschiedenster Art und Farbe sein. Es ist aber nicht nur eine Spule, sondern aus der Mitte des Sternes kommt ein kleines Querstäbchen hervor und an dieses Stäbchen fügt sich dann im rechten Winkel noch eines. Mit Hilfe dieses letzteren Stäbchens auf der einen Seite, und einer der Ausstrahlungen des Sternes auf der anderen Seite, kann das Ganze wie auf zwei Beinen aufrecht stehen. (42)

Here we see expressed Kafka's conviction that he was always badly dressed and his obsession with the angular nature and general shapelessness of his body. In the early diaries, several entries appear in which Kafka deals at some length with the question of clothes and with the sheer impossibility of "fitting" a body such as his. The following short passage does perhaps shed some light on Odradek:

> Ich merkte natürlich, was sehr leicht war, daß ich besonders schlecht angezogen ging. Infolgedessen gab ich den schlechten Kleidern auch in meiner Haltung nach, ging mit gebeugtem Rücken, schiefen Schultern, verlegenen Armen und Händen herum: fürchtete mich vor Spiegeln, weil sie mich in einer meiner Meinung nach unvermeidlichen Häßlichkeit zeigten. (43)

Ultimately, perhaps, the story is more truly a biography than an autobiography, for the narrator is not Odradek but the "Hausvater", in whose home he occasionally appears. And what is the householder's opinion of Odradek? - a formless, useless object, remarkably nimble, which sometimes does not appear for months on end, lives in other people's houses, must be spoken to like a child, laughs "wie man es [nur] <u>ohne Lungen</u> kann" and which

for days on end says nothing. This is surely a caricature of Kafka as son, as member of the family, a portrait of Franz Kafka by his father, but above all a humorous portrait. If the householder finally expresses the fear that Odradek may outlive him, he also says: "Es schadet ja niemandem".

What is Odradek? He is Kafka - "die Sorge des Hausvaters". But, for the benefit of the metaphysicians, it is perhaps worth noting that Kafka has also given an almost exact description of a child's climbing-tank, a toy made from a cotton spool, an elastic band, two matchsticks and a piece of candle. One wonders if this toy was as common among Czech children as it is among British.

"Ein Bericht für eine Akademie".

"Ein Bericht für eine Akademie", in which an ape tells the story of his gradual transformation into a human being, has been interpreted as a satire on the processes of sophistication and civilization, as an attack upon the dehumanising influences in modern society and as an allegory of religious conversion.(44) If the last of these interpretations seems a little far-fetched - the author, William C. Rubinstein, draws an analogy between the animal's beer-drinking and the Sacrament of Holy Communion - there can be no real objection to the first two. The story does, however, have a "secret" meaning and it is that which we intend to discuss here.

An indication of this "secret" meaning is given in the first few lines of the story when the ape mentions that from the time of his capture until the present day, nearly five years have elapsed. This immediately suggests Kafka's engagement to F.B., which lasted from 1912 till 1917, and

since "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" was written between 1917 and 1919, it seems not unreasonable to suggest that the capture and taming of the ape may represent a humorous account of the engagement. In his opening remarks to the Academy, the ape states:

> Nahezu fünf Jahre trennen mich vom Affentum, eine Zeit, kurz vielleicht am Kalender gemessen, unendlich lang aber durchzugaloppieren, so wie ich es getan habe, streckenweise begleitet von vortrefflichen Menschen, Ratschlägen, Beifall und Orchestralmusik, aber im Grunde allein, denn alle Begleitung hielt sich, um im Bilde zu bleiben, weit von der Barriere. Diese Leistung wäre unmöglich gewesen, wenn ich eigensinnig hätte an meinem Ursprung, an den Erinnerungen der Jugend festhalten wollen. Gerade Verzicht auf jeden Eigen= sinn war das oberste Gebot, das ich mir auferlegt hatte; ich, freier Affe, fügte mich diesem Joch. (45)

Similarly, in bachelor circles at least, the married man may be seen as having "submitted himself to the yoke". That is normally a joke but, for Kafka, the joke had less pleasant overtones; for him, marriage involved not only the loss of bachelor freedom but of a freedom which he equated with life itself; the freedom to pursue his literary vocation. In Kafka's eyes, marriage and a literary career were incompatible; if he were to keep the one, he must renounce the other - it is this which is the fundamental theme of "Das Urteil" - and this renunciation meant not only that he must stop writing, but that he must transform his whole manner of life, his very nature:

> Ich bin vor meinen Schwestern, besonders früher war es so, oft ein ganz anderer Mensch gewesen als vor andern Leuten.

> Furchtlos, bloßgestellt, mächtig, überraschend, ergriffen wie sonst nur beim Schreiben. Wenn ich es durch Vermittlung meiner Frau vor allen sein könnte! Wäre es dann aber nicht dem Schreiben entzogen? Nur das nicht, nur das nicht! (46)

And yet, in spite of these considerations, Kafka did get engaged, accompanied by excellent mentors, good advice (in both cases one thinks of Max Brod) and applause, if not by orchestral music. But, for Kafka, the engagement was not a joyful occasion but the first stage in a social plot to steal from him his freedom, to transform his inner nature, to make him a man. Like the ape, he had been captured, like the ape he was "im Grunde allein":

> Aus Berlin zurück. War gebunden wie ein Verbrecher. Hätte man mich in wirklichen Ketten in einen Winkel gesetzt und Gendarmen vor mich gestellt und mich nur auf diese Weise zuschauen lassen, es wäre nicht ärger gewesen. Und das war meine Verlobung. (47)

Thus, for the encaged ape and the engaged Kafka, there is no way out but the way of assimilation. In the course of his imprisonment the ape, who, significantly, has been wounded in the cheek and in the thigh, sets about the difficult task of making himself totally indistinguishable from human beings. In a sense, it was just this that Kafka sought from marriage: normality, assimilation, to be indistinguishable. But he also sought something far more specific: to equal the achievements of a man who in both his marriage and his social life epitomised the assimilated life in all its vitality, in all its vulgarity: his father, Hermann Kafka. In the

"Brief an den Vater", Kafka gives several examples of his father's attempts to make a man of him. Among them is the following passage, so similar in tone to the ape's report that it might form part of the story:

> Du muntertest mich zum Beispiel auf, wenn ich gut salutierte und marschierte, aber ich war kein künftiger Soldat, oder Du muntertest mich auf, wenn ich kräftig essen oder sogar Bier dazu trinken konnte, oder wenn ich unverstandene Lieder nachsingen oder Deine Lieblingsredensarten Dir nachplappern konnte, aber nichts davon gehörte zu meiner Zukunft. (48)

These experiences are clearly reflected in the attempts made by the sailor in "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" to instruct the ape in the ways of man: shaking hands, spitting, smoking and drinking Schnapps. The ape proves to be an outstanding and willing pupil but, in his heart, he knows that the ways of man hold no attraction for him: "Ich wiederhole: es verlockte mich nicht, die Menschen nachzuahmen." In his diaries, Kafka wrote in 1911:

> Als es in meinem Organismus klar geworden war, daß das Schreiben die ergiebigste Richtung meines Wesens sei, drängte sich alles hin und ließ alle Fähigkeiten leer stehn, die sich auf die Freuden des Geschlechtes, des Essens, des Trinkens, des philosophischen Nachdenkens, der Musik zuallererst, richteten. Ich magerte nach allen diesen Richtungen ab. (49)

In the end, however, the ape does succeed in overcoming his ape-nature and in making himself <u>virtually</u> indistinguishable from human beings. Kafka too succeeded <u>partially</u> in overcoming his nature, which was devoted

to literature, by getting engaged, but complete success, in the form of marriage, escaped him. In "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie", he tells the story of this near-success but, in the figure of the half-trained ape which appears at the end of the narrative, we may perhaps see a hint that complete success could only have produced disaster:

> Sie hat nämlich den Irrsinn des verwirrten dressierten Tieres im Blick; das erkenne nur ich, und ich kann es nicht ertragen. (50)

Three Artist Stories.

"Erstes Leid")
"Ein Hungerkünstler") 1923-24.
"Josefine, die Sängerin")

In these three short stories, Kafka presents differing perspectives on the problem of the artist in society. The treatment is on the whole fairly general and, in spite of their obvious importance for any work which sets out to study the artist problem, they leave little or no room for biographical research. The stories are, on the whole, unproblematical. In "Erstes Leid", Kafka gives an ironic comment on the hypersensitivity of the artistic temperament, while in "Josefine, die Sängerin", he describes the artist's position as a sort of sinecure: society has no practical use for the artist, but is prepared to humour him in his claim to be different, superior and necessary. Comparisons have been drawn between Josefine and Frau Klug of the Yiddish Acting Troupe but are without any real foundation. It is, however, possible to read the story of Josefine as an ironic comment

on the place of religion in Jewish society.

In the third story, "Ein Hungerkünstler", one of Kafka's most successful creations, art and asceticism are equated. Here there is a fairly obvious parallel with Kafka's own case, for while the Hunger-Artist's fasting abilities appear to be exceptional, it turns out that he has simply no inclination or desire for human food. His fasting, like Kafka's writing, is not merely a vocation; it is the only way of life possible to him.

Two Studies in Anxiety.

"Eine kleine Frau".)
"Der Bau") 1923-24.

Both these stories were written when Kafka was living with Dora Diamant in the Berlin suburb of Steglitz. They are documents illustrating the processes by which happiness, security and success are destroyed in cases of anxiety-hysteria. Apart from this, all that needs to be pointed out is the ironic consideration that, at a time when Kafka had not only successfully "escaped" from his parents and from the oppressive atmosphere of Prague but had shown himself capable of taking independent action, of setting up house and thus of equalling his father's achievement, he should have written two such oppressively neurotic works. According to Max Brod, the "heroine" of "Eine kleine Frau" was modelled on Kafka's landlady in Berlin, while "Der Bau" was inspired by a new apartment and a household of his own. Kafka was also apparently in the habit of referring to his tormenting tubercular cough as "Das Tier". These are the only specifically

autobiographical pointers. They cannot, however, be verified.

Ultimately, neither of these stories may be included among Kafka's successes, for although, as Roy Pascal states, Kafka's technique may be seen at its purest in "Der Bau",(51) both it and "Eine kleine Frau" are works totally devoid of action and development. In the end, most people will agree with Charles Neider's conclusion that "Der Bau" is "... one of the least rewarding of the novellas, obsessive in tone and almost entirely humourless."(52)

Conclusion

Each of Kafka's short stories is open to a number of interpretations, none of which may be finally shown to be either correct or incorrect. The autobiographical element in each of these works is on the whole less apparent than it is in the novels. This may be regarded as a mark of Kafka's greater success in the shorter works in transforming personal experience into literature and of his proficiency in this particular genre.

The short-story-cycle "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" is of particular importance for the history of Kafka's religious development, since it marks his transition from the religious extremism of 1917 to the more orthodox beliefs of his last years.

C H A P T E R IX

"Das Schloß".

In the Autumn of 1923 Kafka, who had only a matter of months to live, wrote a letter to Dora Diamant's father asking for permission to marry her. Diamant, a most pious and orthodox Polish Jew, took the letter at once to the "Gerer Rebbe", a famous miracle-working Rabbi, to seek his advice. The Rabbi read the letter, put it on one side and, without giving any further explanation, simply said: "No". In this apparently unimportant episode there lies hidden the key to the entire meaning of "Das Schloß". Brod suggests that the Rabbi's refusal was determined by a mystical intuition that Kafka had only a few months to live and that his "No" was justified by the author's death in June 1924. That is beyond proof or disproof; but there are other and more palpable reasons for his decision and it is with these that we are concerned in this chapter. That Kafka was unacceptable as a husband for Dora Diamant is clear, but why was he unacceptable? Firstly, because he was a West-European Jew and had therefore no share in the established traditions of East-European Jewry; secondly, because he held unorthodox, almost heretical beliefs, because he was not a man of faith; thirdly, because he was to all intents and purposes unemployed and could offer his wife neither financial stability nor any prospect of material improvement; fourthly, because, as an unmarried man of forty, he stood under suspicion of suffering from some emotional or sexual maladjustment which might result in a childless and unblessed marriage. (He was also a tubercular and there were dangers there too.) Finally, because he was an artist and therefore, in Jewish eyes at least, not a reliable, solid member of the bourgeoisie. To the "Gerer Rebbe", the representative of East-European Jewry and Judaism, Kafka was thus a dangerous alien: an alien in that he belonged neither nationally nor socially to the East-European Jewish

community; dangerous in that the weakness and the unorthodox nature of his beliefs represented a threat not only to his wife's faith, and to that of any children who might be born to him, but also to the traditions and beliefs of the community as a whole. Tragically, the situation of being a dangerous alien is representative of Kafka's position not only with regard to the Jews but to humanity as a whole, as it is representative of K.'s position with regard to the villagers and the Castle in "Das Schloß". Charles Neider writes:

> It is not an exaggeration to say that Kafka's works - and his novels in particular - are anthropological studies. He deals with a culture, offering a perspective on it. His isolation gave him startling cultural insights. His antagonists are philistines. Like the people of all cultures who have no perspective on themselves, they identify local custom with the universal laws of behaviour. But what seems universal to the insiders is clearly only provincial to the protagonist-outsider.
>
> Kafka's protagonists are dangerous aliens. The insiders are the only true believers. It is they who have access to divine truth; the outsider is conversant only with evil, error and the devil. (1)

While "Der Prozeß" is certainly <u>not</u> an "anthropological study", it is true that, in his last novel, Kafka describes the attempts made by a "dangerous alien" to establish himself and to justify his presence in an orthodox and closed community. The novel is thus similar in theme to "Amerika" but while, in the earlier work, the naïve artist is rejected by a sophisticated bourgeois society to whose "Weltanschauung" his very existence presents a threat, in "Das Schloß" the emphasis is more strongly upon the

national and religious incompatibility of the hero and the community. In both works, however, the theme of alienation, of being "a stranger in a strange land",(2) is dominant.

Kafka's personal sense of alienation has its source, as we saw in Chapter IV, partly in the general situation of the German Jew in Prague at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century: rejected by the Czechs as a German, rejected by the Germans as a Jew and, finally, rejected by the Jews as an assimilated "Scheinjude", he belonged to a unique minority which was continually forced to withdraw into unnatural isolation and to close its doors upon the world. Pavel Eisner, who suggests with some justification that "Kafka is explicable only in terms of his Prague",(3) summarises the situation as follows:

> The Prague German Jew remained aloof from everything Czech; on the other hand, the German, in the figure of a Sudeten German patriot, could only disgust him. At most, the Prague Jew clung outwardly to the Jewish community; he was a Jew on the books, but in him the faith of his fathers had dwindled down to a few attributes and symbols. The Viennese, Berlin and every other Jew had a nation around him, could submerge himself in it to his heart's desire. The situation was quite different in Prague. Here the German Jew lived without a people and against the people .... [He] was, so to speak, an incarnation of strangeness and will-to-be-strange. (4)

Yet if the Prague German Jews were isolated from their environment, they could at least find consolation in being a minority group, in sharing a common heritage, or, more accurately, lack of heritage and in the knowledge that they constituted a cultural and economic élite. But even this

consolation was denied to Kafka, for the Prague author was an alien among his own people, an eccentric in the true sense of one who stands without the circle, a man who, with many of his generation, had rejected the spiritually arid Judaism of his parents and who had neither social nor material ambition; and Kafka had no wife, no children and, in his own opinion, no family. Had he shared the Prague Jew's "will-to-be-strange", or his father's bitter contempt for every race and creed, his position would have been bearable. But Kafka's nature was dominated by the will to be sociable, by an intense desire to be a useful, accepted member of the community. Max Brod writes:

> Zwei entgegenstrebende Tendenzen bekämpfen einander in Kafka: die Einsamkeitssehnsucht und der Wille zur Gemeinschaft. Aber man versteht ihn nur dann richtig, wenn man erkennt, daß er die (in ihm unbestreitbar vorhandene) Tendenz zur Einsamkeit prinzipiell mißbilligte, daß ihm ein Leben in der Gemeinschaft und sinnvollen Arbeit (ein Leben in das der Held K. des Schloß=Romans vergebens einzudringen sucht) das oberste Ziel und Ideal bedeutet hat. (5)

Yet this "will to be sociable" was not unequivocal, not directed indiscriminately towards every person and every community. Kafka's attitude to society was characterised by ambivalence, for while he wished to "belong", to lead a normal and productive existence, he shared the artist's contempt for the "Bürger", for his preoccupation with material success and social status - in short, for that very productive normality which he claimed to admire. The supreme irony, and indeed tragedy of his position was that he rejected the citizens of his native city both socially and as Jews, and that he felt drawn towards orthodox, Eastern Jewry, the one social and religious

community which was bound to reject him; for Kafka was himself a true citizen of the Prague ghetto. In a letter to Milena he wrote:

> Wir kennen doch beide ausgiebig charakteristische Exemplare von Westjuden, ich bin, soviel ich weiß, der westjüdischeste von ihnen, das bedeutet, übertrieben ausgedrückt, daß mir keine ruhige Sekunde geschenkt ist, nichts ist mir geschenkt, alles muß erworben werden, nicht nur die Gegenwart und Zukunft, auch noch die Vergangenheit, etwas das doch jeder Mensch vielleicht mitbekommen hat, auch das muß erworben werden, das ist vielleicht die schwerste Arbeit. (6)

This "most typical Western Jew" comes then to orthodox Judaism, to East-European Jewry, as K. comes to the village, a man with neither past, present nor future, a man to whom nothing is granted and who must earn everything. Among the East-European Jews who came to Prague in 1911, among the Berlin Jews whom he met in 1923, Kafka was and remained a stranger. To the Jews he was a gentile; to the Gentiles a Jew. Thus, in "Das Schloß", we find a man who, although he exhibits certain inherently Jewish characteristics in his attitude to society and to women in particular, is to all intents and purposes a non-Jew and thus an intruder, dangerous and clearly unwanted. The novel revolves around this man's attempts to establish himself in the community by assuming the appurtenances or tokens of membership, by marrying and finding employment. He fails to realise, however, that these are only tokens and that the community also requires of its members uncritical acceptance of its traditions, customs and beliefs. What is specifically Jewish about this village is that belief and behaviour appear as

indistinguishable and inseperable, that the Castle and the Village are one:

> Nirgends noch hatte K. Amt und Leben so verflochten gesehen wie hier, so verflochten, daß es manchmal scheinen konnte, Amt und Leben hätten ihre Plätze gewechselt. (7)

And again: "Zwischen den Bauern und dem Schloß ist kein großer Unterschied", sagte der Lehrer. (8)

"Das Judentum", Kafka once said to Gustav Janouch, "ist ja nicht nur eine Sache des Glaubens, sondern vor allem die Sache der Lebenspraxis einer durch den Glauben bestimmten Gemeinschaft."(9) If K. is unacceptable in the village it is basically because, as an alien, he cannot help trying to distinguish between these two, between the community and its faith, and thus to separate them. While he strives to become a member of the community, he rejects the very beliefs which make it a community at all. It is, in essence, Kafka's own position with regard to Jewry for Kafka, as we attempted to show in Chapter VI, was an atheist who, in spite of his atheism, longed to be accepted by a race whose sole raison d'être lay in its religious creed. In a remarkable passage in the "Acht Oktavhefte" - remarkable because of its accuracy - Kafka gave the following summary of his spiritual inheritance and of his place in the world. The passage will serve admirably to introduce the next section in which we will examine K.'s position as a "stranger in a strange land" and the significance of his claim to be a land-surveyor appointed by the Castle.

> Es ist nicht Trägheit, böser Wille, Ungeschicklichkeit, welche mir alles mißlingen oder nicht einmal mißlingen lassen: Familienleben, Freundschaft, Ehe, Beruf, Literatur, sondern es

ist der Mangel des Bodens, der Luft, des Gebotes. Diese zu schaffen ist meine Aufgabe. Ich habe von den Erfordernissen des Lebens gar nichts mitgebracht, so viel ich weiß, sondern nur die allgemeine menschliche Schwäche. Mit dieser habe ich das Negative meiner Zeit, die mir ja sehr nahe ist, die ich nie zu bekämpfen, sondern gewissermaßen zu vertreten das Recht habe, kräftig aufgenommen. An dem geringen Positiven sowie an dem äußersten, zum Positiven umkippenden Negativen, hatte ich keinen ererbten Anteil. Ich bin nicht von der allerdings schon schwer sinkenden Hand des Christentums ins Leben geführt worden wie Kierkegaard und habe nicht den letzten Zipfel des davonfliegenden jüdischen Gebetmantels noch gefangen wie die Zionisten. Ich bin Ende oder Anfang. (10)

The Land-Surveyor K.: "A stranger in a strange land."

In attempting to relate the events and ideas described in "Das Schloß" to Kafka's own life, the biographer is immediately faced with the difficulty that the hero of the novel is, or claims to be, a land-surveyor, while Kafka never held any post even remotely connected with land-surveying. Two further difficulties in this connection are that "Landvermesser", if taken symbolically, might refer to almost anything or anyone and that considerable doubt is expressed in the novel as to whether K. is really a land-surveyor at all. These difficulties may, of course, demonstrate nothing more than Kafka's success in transforming and thereby obscuring the autobiographical element in the novel, but the quotation with which we concluded the previous section does perhaps indicate that Kafka's choice of

profession for his hero was neither accidental nor indiscriminate. He writes: " .... der Mangel des Bodens, der Luft, des Gebotes. Diese zu schaffen ist meine Aufgabe". Like Kafka, the hero of "Das Schloß" feels the "lack of ground underfoot". Indeed, it is this lack which constitutes his greatest misfortune and which, throughout his stay in the village, he tries in vain to make good, for K. seeks that solid ground or foundation for life that is provided by membership of a community, by an awareness of and share in tradition, by the possession of a specific religious belief. On his arrival in the village, K. has none of these; he is like a plant hovering in mid-air, seeking a suitable soil in which to take root. In this sense, he is a "Landvermesser", one who surveys the land, who estimates its size and suitability, or perhaps, more freely translated, one determined to see how the land lies. K. thus stands not only for Kafka, who twice compared himself to The Wandering Jew, but, perhaps incidentally, for all of Jewry, for a people who throughout their history have been forced to plant themselves in alien soils and who, viewed in a less favourable light, have enjoyed the reputation of always being awake to the best chance, of carefully assessing the lie of the land. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the Jew has always been a "stranger in a strange land", a man "surveying" land, rarely his own, in the hope of finding "ground underfoot, air and the commandment", and that this man has almost always stood under suspicion of opportunism. Max Brod sets great store by this interpretation. He points out that K., in his relationships with the villagers, displays attitudes characteristic of the Jew attempting to settle in a non-Jewish community: since the Diaspora, the Jew has tended to insist upon his legal "right to

settle", has interpreted the coolness or indifference of the Gentile as a tacit invitation rather than as an attempt to repel him, to "freeze him out", has thrust himself with an apparent lack of sensitivity and in the face of great resistance upon every community and, having settled, has shown only arrogance and disrespect for the traditions and beliefs of his hosts. Of K.'s statement: "Keiner kann keines Gefährte hier sein", Brod writes:

> Es ist das besondere Gefühl des Juden, der sich in einer fremden Umgebung einwurzeln möchte, der aus allen Kräften seiner Seele danach strebt, den Fremden sich anzunähern, gänzlich ihresgleichen zu werden, - und dem diese Verschmelzung doch nicht gelingt. Das Wort "Jude" kommt im "Schloß" nicht vor. Dennoch ist mit Händen zu greifen, das Kafka im "Schloß" aus seiner jüdischen Seele hervor in einer schlichten Erzählung über die Gesamtsituation des heutigen Judentums mehr gesagt hat, als in hundert gelehrten Abhandlungen zu lesen ist.
>
> Schon in dieser kleinen präludierenden Szene findet man die Situation der "Völker" in ihrer ruhigen Ablehnung und die des Juden in seiner notgedrungenen Freundlichkeit, Anbiederung, ja Aufdringlichkeit mit erschütternd objektiver Melancholie gezeichnet. (11)

There is undoubtedly an element of truth in all of this; that K. is aggressive, "pushful", arrogant and disrespectful is clear:

> Sie sind ein paar Tage im Ort, und schon wollen Sie alles besser kennen als die Eingeborenen, besser als ich alte Frau und als Frieda, die im Herrenhof so viel gesehen und gehört hat. (12)

Yet this "knowing-better" is perhaps only a symptom of K.'s general sense of insecurity, an example of that compensatory show of superiority

that inevitably accompanies the inferiority complex. Similarly K.'s "pushfulness" may be explained not only in terms of the Jew's insistence on his "right to settle" but as a simple expression of the hero's overwhelming desire to be accepted. In the face of "calm rejection", the isolated person may well be excused a little importunity:

> K., als Fremder, grüßte zuerst: "Könnte ich Sie einmal besuchen?" "Ich wohne in der Schwanengasse beim Fleischhauer". Das war nun zwar mehr eine Adressenangabe als eine Einladung, dennoch sagte K.: "Gut, ich werde kommen". (13)

However, even if we accept that K. is a Jew, Brod's suggestion that the village represents the Gentile world involves a contradiction within his own interpretation of Kafka's work and flies in the face of the biographical evidence. If, as Brod would have it, the village is to be identified with Gentiledom, then K. must represent that type of Jew who is determined to abandon his Jewish heritage and to immerse himself in Gentile ways to the point of complete assimilation. Not only was this a species for which Kafka held nothing but contempt, a species most clearly represented by his own father, but Brod's picture stands in complete opposition to his usual description of Kafka as a Hebrew scholar, Zionist and Jewish saint. In that K. is an alien and that he is determined to settle in a community that is equally determined to reject him, he does embody "the situation of Jewry as a whole today". One <u>may</u> interpret Kafka's symbols in this way; but such an interpretation has only incidental significance for the biographer, for there is no evidence to suggest that Kafka ever associated himself with "the lot of Jewry" in Brod's sense, or felt any desire to be a Czech among Czechs,

a Gentile among Gentiles. If it is safe to accept Kafka's definition of himself as "the most typical Western Jew", it is certainly not safe to accept Brod's definition of him as the most typical Jew; for the two stand in almost direct opposition. One can, of course, observe the "psychology of assimilation" in Kafka, but it is towards East-European Jewry, towards orthodoxy and, in his last years, towards Zion that Kafka feels himself drawn.

Kafka's Zionism, as we saw in Chapter VI, was a social rather than a religious or political phenomenon; it was, at the same time, a compound expression of his will-to-be-sociable, and of his contempt for the Western Jew, and for himself. In his attitude to the Eastern Jews, we then find a strange mixture of admiration and almost embarrassing self-abnegation for, in his awareness of the inherent superiority of the Eastern Jew, Kafka prostrates himself before him, a gesture which serves only to increase the latter's contempt: among his conversations with Janouch we find the following:

> ... ich möchte zu diesen armen Juden des Ghetto hinlaufen, ihnen den Rocksaum küssen und nichts, gar nichts sagen. Ich wäre vollkommen glücklich, wenn sie stillschweigend meine Nähe ertragen würden. (14)

And again in the "Briefe an Milena":

> Wenn man mir freigestellt hätte, ich könnte sein, was ich will, dann hätte ich ein kleiner ostjüdischer Junge sein wollen, im Winkel des Saales, ohne eine Spur von Sorgen, der Vater diskuriert in der Mitte mit den Männern, die Mutter, dick eingepackt, wühlt in den Reisefetzen, die Schwester schwätzt mit den Mädchen und kratzt sich in ihrem schönen Haar. (15)

But for Kafka, this little Eastern-Jewish boy, whom he would like to be, must remain infinitely remote. When he grows up, he will undoubtedly share his parents' contempt for that type of Jew which the Prague author represents. He will not even be prepared to "endure his presence in silence" and in this, in Kafka's opinion at least, he will be perfectly justified:

> Ost= und Westjuden ein Abend. Die Verachtung der Ostjuden für die hiesigen Juden. Die Berechtigung dieser Verachtung. Wie die Ostjuden den Grund dieser Verachtung kennen, die West= juden aber nicht. (16)

Here, in essence, we see the relationship between K. and the villagers in "Das Schloß". There is, however, one important difference: while the Jews of Prague were aware of the contempt felt towards them by the East-European Jews, but were ignorant of the reason for that contempt, in the sense that they did not know of and therefore did not believe in the existence of any such reason, K., like his creator, is not only prepared to believe in the existence of the reason, but is determined to eradicate it. While the East-West Jewish situation was one of stalemate, of mutual contempt, the contempt in "Das Schloß" is tragically one-sided, for K., like Kafka, shows no trace of the will-to-be-strange: on the contrary, he appears as a proselyte in a non-proselytising community:

> "Ihr wundert Euch wahrscheinlich über die geringe Gast= freundlichkeit", sagte der Mann, "aber Gastfreundlichkeit ist bei uns nicht Sitte, wir brauchen keine Gäste .... hat man Euch gerufen, so braucht man Euch wahrscheinlich, das ist wohl eine Ausnahme, wir aber, wir kleinen Leute, halten uns an die Regel, das könnt Ihr uns nicht verdenken." (17)

In view of K.'s experiences in the village, "our lack of hospitality" must appear as rather an understatement, for the hero of "Das Schloß" is not only shunned by his "hosts", but physically ejected from their houses. Here again, the situation has Jewish rather than Christian overtones, a point which Brod seems to have missed, for while, in the majority of Christian sects, converts are not only welcomed, but the conversion is seen as representing something of a victory for the particular creed, Judaism displays a complete lack of interest in the prospective convert. Encouragement is certainly the last thing he may expect, for the Talmud includes what might be called a "detailed course of instruction" for dissuading proselytes, by pointing out to them the not inconsiderable difficulties involved in becoming a Jew: circumcision, ritual immersion, the need for strict adherence to the articles of belief, etc. Judaism's attitude to conversion is thus unequivocal: "Proselytes are as hard for Israel to endure as a sore".(18) To K., the landlady of the Bridge Inn says:

> Was sind nun aber Sie, Sie sind nicht aus dem Schloß, Sie sind nicht aus dem Dorfe, Sind sind nichts. Leider aber sind Sie doch etwas, ein Fremder, einer, der überzählig und überall im Weg ist, einer, wegen dessen man immerfort Scherereien hat, wegen dessen man die Mägde ausquartieren muß, einer, dessen Aussichten unbekannt sind, einer, der unsere liebste kleine Frieda verführt hat und dem man sie leider zur Frau geben muß. Wegen alles dessen mache ich Ihnen ja im Grunde keine Vorwürfe. Sie sind, was Sie sind. (19)

It is K.'s misfortune, as it was Kafka's, that he is what he is. The "ground underfoot" which Kafka seeks, which his hero seeks in

"Das Schloß", is not Gentile ground but the lost foundation - lost to all the German Jews of Prague - of a Jewish inheritance and Jewish membership. The following is an extract from a letter which Kafka wrote to Brod in July 1922, when he was working on "Das Schloß":

> Was mich betrifft, ist es leider nur Spaß oder Halbschlaf= Einfall, bei der Vakanz des "Juden" an mich zu denken. Wie durfte ich bei meiner grenzenlosen Unkenntnis der Dinge, völligen Beziehungslosigkeit zu Menschen, bei dem Mangel jedes festen jüdischen Bodens unter den Füßen an etwas derartiges denken? Nein, nein. (20)

"Ein Landvermesser" as one who surveys land with a view to settling, as an alien, a proselyte in a non-proselytising community, as a Zionist who can ask: "Was habe ich mit Juden gemeinsam?" - these are among the possible implications of Kafka's choice of profession for his hero. It is perhaps also relevant that the verb "vermessen" means "to measure wrongly" or "to miscalculate" and that K. constantly underestimates the difficulties involved in gaining admittance to the village society and in making the considerable journey from the village to the Castle. Further, he suffers from "Vermessenheit" - arrogance, over-self-confidence and impatience - qualities which Kafka associated with man in his most sinful state.

One may, of course, take K.'s claim to be a land-surveyor at its face-value, for the surveyor - and this is surely significant - has a unique and vital rôle to play in every orthodox Jewish community. In I.W. Slotki's introduction to "'Erubin" (The Talmud) we find the following statement:

> According to the traditional Sabbath laws, as explained and interpreted by the Rabbis, it is forbidden on a holy day to walk

> in any direction beyond the distance of two thousand cubits, or to move objects on the Sabbath in any domain other than a private one, beyond four cubits. (21)

Since, however, it was clearly impossible for every person to make an exact assessment of his movements on the Sabbath, and since these ordinances had to be scrupulously obeyed, it was necessary to have in each orthodox Jewish community, clearly demarcated bounderies known as "Sabbath limits", beyond which no Jew who cared for his soul's salvation would pass, but within which movement on the Sabbath was permitted. The marking of these bounderies was the task of the land-surveyor. It was a difficult task involving great responsibility and one whose execution was subject to the most complicated rules and regulations:

> Mishnah: Sabbath limits may be measured only with a rope of the length of fifty cubits, neither less nor more, and a man may measure only while holding the end of the rope on a level with his heart. If in the course of measuring, the surveyor reaches a glen or a fallen wall, he spans it and resumes his measuring .... provided he does not go beyond the Sabbath limit. (22)

As a Jew, however unorthodox, Kafka could not fail to be familiar with the Talmudic law relating to "Sabbath limits". The Prague ghetto was itself a "bounded area" and, in a diary entry for September 29th, 1911, Kafka refers specifically to the city of Warsaw, around which as a result of bribery, the telephone and telegraph wires were put in a complete circle, thus making is possible for even the most pious Jew to move around carrying small articles. This information is relevant for two reasons: firstly,

because, in so far as K. assumes that the Castle should require the specialised services of a land-surveyor, it supports the analogy which we are attempting to draw between the village and orthodox Jewry; secondly, because the Castle's reaction to K.'s offer of his professional services illustrates his alien position. To K., the Superintendent says:

> Sie sind als Landvermesser aufgenommen, wie Sie sagen; aber, leider, wir brauchen keinen Landvermesser. Es wäre nicht die geringste Arbeit für ihn da. Die Grenzen unserer kleinen Wirtschaften sind abgesteckt, alles ist ordentlich eingetragen. (23)

It is interesting to note that the Superintendent automatically associates land-surveying with the marking out and official recording of boundaries, although this is surely only one aspect of that profession. Clearly, however, the village has no need for a land-surveyor in any capacity. Its boundaries are already marked; it is a closed and enclosed community. K. thus appears not only as an unwanted outsider, but as one whose professional services are entirely superfluous. Similarly, the assimilated West-European Jew, a man who, from the religious standpoint was nothing more than an apprentice to Judaism, had nothing to offer his orthodox Eastern counterpart who lived self-sufficiently within the boundaries of tradition and belief which, for him, had been fixed for generations. In a passage from "Das Schloß" which he later deleted, Kafka wrote of his hero:

> Freilich, er war gestern angekommen, und das Schloß stand hier seit alten Zeiten. (24)

It is, then, this sense of not being needed by the community to

which he most desperately longed to belong that Kafka expresses in "Das Schloß". In the next section we will examine the attempts made by the aliens Kafka and K. to justify their existence in a hostile community.

"Kein Mensch kann ein ungerechtfertigtes Leben leben."(25)

Kafka's sense of alienation as "the most typical Western Jew" was accompanied, as one might expect, by an intense awareness of personal guilt. To live apart from society was not merely a misfortune but a sin, an offence against God and the community, and one for which he could not readily atone. Membership, Kafka discovered, was easy for those who were already members and had no need to obtain it, but the alien moved in a vicious circle in which he was rejected <u>because</u> he was an alien. The problem was aggravated by Kafka's utter disinterest in social or material success and by his dedication to and complete immersion in his artistic vocation; for this, as he was well aware, was a sphere of activity which would not lead him towards his fellow man but away from him: "Intellektuelle Arbeit reißt den Menschen aus der menschlichen Gemeinschaft. Das Handwerk dagegen führt ihn zu den Menschen." It is not, perhaps, a very original observation. The Romantics have always thought of manual labour, of the peasant community and of "mother earth" as representing man in his most natural and unspoiled state. But for Kafka it is not merely a question of the evils of sophistication - he was after all no sophisticate - but of justifying a life which, in social terms, may appear to have no justification:

the life of a man dedicated to art. The affinity which Kafka felt towards Flaubert, and to which he constantly refers in his diaries, derived not only from the knowledge that the French Realist was a tubercular, but from Kafka's belief that for Flaubert the problem of self-justification was also a reality. In Brod's Biography, we find the following anecdote:

> Ich werde nie vergessen, mit welch tiefer Bewegung mir Kafka den Passus am Ende der "Souvenirs Intimes" von Flauberts Nichte, Caroline Commanville, vorlas. Es wird an dieser Stelle erzählt, wie Flaubert seinem Idol "La littérature" alles geopfert hat, Liebe, Zärtlichkeit, alles, und die Erzählerin fragt, ob er nicht etwa in den letzten Jahren diese Abweichung von der "route commune" bedauert habe. Sie ist geneigt, dies anzunehmen. Einige bewegte Worte, die Flaubert einmal bei einem seiner letzten Spaziergänge mit ihr sagte, lassen es sie glauben. Sie hatten eine ihrer Freundinnen besucht, sie im Kreise ihrer entzückenden Kinder angetroffen. Auf dem Heimweg längs der Seine bemerkte Flaubert: "Ils sont dans le vrai". Diesen Satz hat Kafka oft zitiert. (26)

It is, however, the very impossibility of being "dans le vrai" that Kafka expresses in "Das Schloß", a total impossibility whose parts are the impossibility of believing, of marrying, of having children, of living within a family, of being sound in body and of tolerating professional life. For Kafka to have overcome any of these "impossibilities" would have been a token to society of his normality and therefore of his acceptability; but such victories were unknown to him:

> Auf Balzacs Spazierstockgriff: ich breche alle Hindernisse:
> Auf meinem: mich brechen alle Hindernisse. (27)

In reality, however, it was not to society that Kafka had to justify his existence but to himself. He had, after all, a job in which he was more than successful, and his literary efforts received considerable recognition during his own lifetime. To have a profession and to contribute something practical to society - these were among Kafka's criteria for a justified existence, as they were among the means by which he hoped to create for himself a place among his fellow men. But, in his own opinion, both his job and his writing were socially worthless, integral parts of that vast deception of humanity which was his own life:

> Wenn ich mich auf mein Endziel hin prüfe, so ergibt sich, daß ich nicht eigentlich danach strebe, ein guter Mensch zu werden und einem höchsten Gericht zu entsprechen, sondern sehr gegensätzlich, die ganze Menschen= und Tiergemeinschaft zu überblicken, ihre grundlegenden Vorlieben, Wünsche, sittlichen Ideale zu erkennen, sie auf einfache Vorschriften zurückzuführen und mich in ihrer Richtung möglichst bald dahin zu entwickeln, daß ich durchaus allen wohlgefällig werde. Zusammengefaßt kommt es mir also nur auf das Menschengericht an und dieses will ich überdies betrügen, allerdings ohne Betrug. (28)

The quotation would serve admirably as K.'s manifesto, for K. is a man of good faith who - because he is an alien - must nonetheless deceive society in order to enter it. The deception is manifested primarily in K.'s claim to be a land-surveyor, in his attempt to persuade the villagers that his professional qualifications justify his presence in the community. Immediately upon his arrival in the village K. is threatened with eviction. At the Bridge Inn, where he puts up for the night, he is awakened from his sleep by the under-castellan, Schwartzer, who informs him that no one may

stay in the village without an official permit and that he must justify his presence or leave at once. After a moment's thought, K. announces that he is a land-surveyor appointed by the Castle, a statement which, throughout the course of his stay in the village, is received with nothing but scepticism. This scepticism reflects Kafka's own doubts as to the validity of his "claim" to be either an insurance official or an artist.

That Kafka should have felt uneasy about his position both in the "Assicurazioni Generali" and in the "Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt", that he should have regarded himself as being, to all intents and purposes, a confidence trickster is understandable, for he received the first post largely due to the influence of the American Vice-Consul, Herr Weissberger, and managed to retain the second less on the basis of the quantity or quality of his work - though the latter was never in doubt - than because of the protection of the Director, Herr Otto Pribram, and the "Anstalt's" policy of always employing at least one Jew - for appearance's sake. In a conversation with Janouch, Kafka spoke of the "Anstalt" as "ein dunkles Bürokratennest, in dem ich als einziger Paradejude fungiere"[29], while, in the "Briefe an Milena", he reveals his bad conscience for receiving money on "false pretences":

> Ich fahre auf, das Telephon! Zum Direktor! Das erstemal seitdem ich in Prag bin, in Dienstsachen hinuntergerufen! Jetzt kommt endlich der ganze Schwindel heraus. Seit achtzehn Tagen nichts gemacht, als Briefe geschrieben, Briefe gelesen, vor allem aus dem Fenster geschaut, Briefe in der Hand gehalten, hingelegt, wieder aufgenommen, dann auch Besuche gehabt und sonst nichts. Aber als ich hinunterkomme,

> ist er freundlich, lächelt, erzählt etwas Amtliches, das ich nicht verstehe, nimmt Abschied, weil er auf Urlaub geht, ein unbegreiflich guter Mensch. (30)

For a malingerer, such conditions would have been ideal, but for a man already tormented by bad conscience upon almost every issue that affected his existence, this official tolerance was merely humiliating. Here in the "Anstalt" Kafka could not hope to find the justification for his existence which he sought. It was, rather, an elaborate and sophisticated game in which he pretended that he worked, and his employers, from a variety of political and personal motives, accepted the pretence as if it were reality. Yet Kafka was himself incapable of sustaining the pretence. That he could spend his office hours daydreaming, writing letters, receiving visitors or composing the first drafts of his novels and short stories was for him not merely a token of his privileged position, but further evidence that even his slightest efforts on behalf of the firm were superfluous, that he was not needed, and that, if it ever became necessary, he could justify neither his position nor the acceptance of payment for services which he had not in fact rendered.

In the previous section we indicated that the professional services of the land-surveyor K. were also unnecessary in a village whose boundaries had been fixed for generations. This, as we saw, has a specifically Jewish significance but it is at the same time an allusion to Kafka's position in the "Anstalt". In claiming that he is a land-surveyor, K. deliberately attempts to deceive the Castle officials, for it becomes clear in the course of the narrative that he has no experience in this field and that the old

assistants and the surveying equipment that he refers to in the opening chapters are nothing more than figments of his imagination. Yet, in falsifying or inventing his qualifications, K. challenges the Castle authorities, who are clearly omniscient, to expose him. But the opposite happens: the Castle confirms his appointment as land-surveyor. K. does not, however, regard this as a victory but as an attempt to humiliate him, for the confirmation merely indicates that the Castle is aware of his disingenuousness, but is prepared to take his statements at their face value:

> K. horchte auf. Das Schloß hatte ihn also zum Landvermesser ernannt. Das war einerseits ungünstig für ihn, denn es zeigte, daß man im Schloß alles Nötige über ihm wußte, die Kräfteverhältnisse abgewogen hatte und den Kampf lächelnd aufnahm. (31)

K., like his creator, seeks to justify his existence by reference to the contribution he can make to society in his professional capacity or, failing that, to have his position clarified, to receive an honest assessment of his social worth. He is nonplussed and displeased by the Castle's reaction to his appearance, because it merely serves to make his position more nebulous, to humiliate him and to deprive him for all time of the opportunity of justifying his existence; and the Castle is prepared to carry the pretence to its logical conclusion. Within twenty-four hours of his arrival in the village, K. is supplied with <u>new</u> "old assistants" who, significantly, have no surveying equipment, since K. is clearly not in a position to do any surveying. The situation becomes intolerable, however, when he receives a letter from Klamm, praising him for his work and

encouraging him to even greater efforts. In a desperate attempt finally to clarify his position, should that involve his dismissal, K. sends the following message to his employer, a message whose similarity to the letter written by Kafka to Milena, and quoted above, is remarkable:

> Der Landvermesser K. bittet den Herrn Vorstand, ihm zu erlauben, persönlich bei ihm vorzusprechen. Zu seiner Bitte ist er deshalb gezwungen, weil bisher alle Mittelspersonen vollständig versagt haben, zum Beweis führt er an, daß er nicht die geringste Vermesserarbeit bisher ausgeführt hat und nach den Mitteilungen des Gemeindevorstehers auch niemals ausführen wird, mit verzweifelter Beschämung hat er deshalb den letzten Brief des Herrn Vorstandes gelesen, nur die persönliche Vorsprache beim Herrn Vorstand kann hier helfen. (32)

But the interview is never granted. K., who says to the Superintendent: "Ich will keine Gnadengeschenke vom Schloß, sondern mein Recht",(33) is left no alternative but to accept that his employment by the Castle will always be a "favour", that a man with no rights cannot demand his rights and that he must therefore be content with his "privileged" position. But it is just this that K. finds unbearable for, like Kafka, he is well aware that to be privileged is to receive what is <u>not</u> one's by right, that privilege and self-justification are opposed. The peace of mind and "indestructible repose" which result from having done one's work well and which K. observes in the Castle officials, are not to be his:

> "Sieh, was mir der Herr schreibt", sagte K. und hielt ihm den Brief vors Gesicht. "Der Herr ist falsch unterrichtet. Ich mache doch keine Vermesserarbeit, und was die Gehilfen wert sind, siehst du selbst. Und die Arbeit, die ich nicht mache, kann ich

> freilich auch nicht unterbrechen, nicht einmal die Erbitterung des Herrn kann ich erregen, wie sollte ich seine Anerkennung verdienen! Und getrost kann ich niemals sein." (33a)

Kafka's symbols are, as we have already seen, open to more than one interpretation. In choosing the word "Landvermesser" he alludes not only to the actual profession of land-surveying, but also to the position of the Jews in a hostile Gentile world, to his personal alienation among the East-European Jews and to his job as an insurance official in the "Versicherungs-Anstalt". In each case it is his sense of alienation, of not being needed, that emerges most clearly from the text. It would therefore be remarkable if the novel contained no reference to Kafka's literary vocation, since it was as an artist that he experienced this alienation most intensely.

In November 1903, Kafka wrote in a letter to Oskar Pollak:

> Gott will nicht, daß ich schreibe, ich aber, ich muß. So ist es ein ewiges Auf und Ab, schließlich ist doch Gott der Stärkere und es ist mehr Unglück dabei, als Du Dir denken kannst. So viele Kräfte sind in mir an einen Pflock gebunden, aus dem vielleicht ein grüner Baum wird, während sie freigemacht mir und dem Staat nützlich sein könnten. (34)

Kafka's reference here to the restraint put upon his literary activities by God need not be taken too seriously, for the letter was written during the "Kunstwart" period when his atheism was at its most virulent. Yet it is true that throughout his life Kafka's desire to write was stifled by forces and events apparently beyond his control; by the need to earn his daily bread in an insurance office, by his sense of duty towards his parents

which involved him in untold miseries in his father's factory, by his poor health and his bodily weakness and by the internal conflicts which eventually destroyed him both mentally and physically. Thus, in May 1913, ten years after he had made the prophetic little joke to Oskar Pollak, Kafka noted with deadly seriousness in his diaries: "Mein unsicherer Kopf, F., der Verfall im Bureau, die körperliche Unmöglichkeit zu schreiben und das innere Bedürfnis danach."(35) This was a personal problem, brought about by his family's, and in particular by his father's attitude to his writing, and by his unique personality. Not every author is prevented from writing by his environment. But, in so far as his literary vocation remained unrecognised by his family, his position was representative of that of the artist in society. If, in his job, Kafka felt the need for self-justification, if he suspected he was a parasite and that his services were unnecessary, these feelings were merely heightened by his awareness that society took an even more extreme attitude to the artist, and by his unwilling acknowledgement that society was right. At best, the artist's social position was ambiguous. If his existence was not actually denied, his presence in the community was unofficial. He was thus a man without rights, an alien, tolerated but not officially recognised, a burden which society bore, not gladly but because it too was uncertain as to the validity of his claim to be there:

> "Wir brauchen den Schuldiener etwa so dringend wie den Landvermesser. Schuldiener wie Landvermesser, es ist eine Last an unserem Halse."
>
> "So bleibt dann das Ergebnis", sagte K., "daß alles sehr unklar und unlösbar ist, bis auf den Hinauswurf."

> "Wer wollte wagen, Sie hinauszuwerfen, Herr Landvermesser?" sagte der Vorsteher. "Eben die Unklarheit der Vorfragen verbürgt Ihnen die höflichste Behandlung, nur sind sie dem Anschein nach zu empfindlich. Niemand hält Sie hier zurück, aber das ist doch noch kein Hinauswurf." (36)

The reference to K.'s position as a janitor suggests a further biographical point. With whatever justification, K. has come to the village to be a land-surveyor. That is his vocation, as literature was Kafka's. But the Castle has no need for a land-surveyor and K. finds himself in the paradoxical position of being employed but out of work:

> "Das ist erstaunlich", sagte Bürgel mit lebhaftem Werfen des Kopfes und zog einen Notizblock unter der Decke hervor, um sich etwas zu notieren. "Sie sind Landvermesser und haben keine Landvermesserarbeit". K. nickte mechanisch. (37)

Similarly, in a letter to Max Brod, dated July 1922, Kafka writes:

> [Ich meine] .... natürlich nicht, daß mein Leben besser ist, wenn ich nicht schreibe. Vielmehr ist es dann viel schlimmer und gänzlich unerträglich und muß mit dem Irrsinn enden. Aber das freilich nur unter der Bedingung, daß ich, wie es tatsächlich der Fall ist, auch wenn ich nicht schreibe, Schriftsteller bin und ein nicht schreibender Schriftsteller ist allerdings ein den Irrsinn herausforderndes Unding. (38)

To prevent the possibility of his going mad through sheer inactivity and boredom, the Castle offers K. the post of school janitor. His acceptance results in an extreme case of misplaced vocation, for K.'s sole desire is to be a land-surveyor: "Mein Ehrgeiz geht nicht dahin, große, mich betreffende Aktensäulen entstehen und zusammenkrachen zu lassen, sondern als kleiner

Landvermesser bei einem kleinen Zeichentisch ruhig zu arbeiten."(39) In this quotation we see perhaps the most direct reference in the novel to the conflict between profession and vocation which caused Kafka such agonies throughout his life and to which he gave literary expression in "Die Verwandlung". K., like Kafka, is a man with no bureaucratic ambitions, a man who has been forced to neglect his true interests and to take up a totally unsuitable and humiliating position. But K., unlike every other Kafka hero, is not a defeatist but a man determined to follow his true profession, and to insist upon his rights, whatever the cost. If the drawing-board is the symbol for K.'s profession, the writing-desk is the symbol for Kafka's. And to these symbols both men are determined to hold fast:

> Das Dasein des Schriftstellers ist wirklich vom Schreibtisch abhängig, er darf sich eigentlich, wenn er dem Irrsinn entgehen will, niemals vom Schreibtisch entfernen, mit den Zähnen muß er sich festhalten. (40)

We have now seen that for K., as for his creator, there existed no real possibility of justifying his existence in society by reference to either his profession or his vocation. To both, however, a third solution presents itself: to marry into the community, and by this marriage to demonstrate one's normality, for what is normal is familiar and what is familiar ceases to be alien. It is this solution which we will examine in the next section.

"Ein Mann ohne Weib ist kein Mensch".(41)

> "The Castle", product of Kafka's maturity, is "old age", a backward glance out of the comfort of disease at the tumultuous times of struggle for salvation through hetero-sexuality. At the same time, it is a foreshadowing, in its abundance of domestic and fertility symbols, of the joyous heterosexual phase which was to follow. (42)

This is Charles Neider's interpretation of "Das Schloß". In essence it is remarkably accurate, but an important detail is missing. It is that Kafka's "struggle for salvation through heterosexuality" and his description of that struggle in "Das Schloß" can only be fully understood against the background of his Judaism, of the inherently Jewish attitude to marriage which he displays in both his autobiographical and his imaginative writings. In the "Brief an den Vater", Kafka describes his plans to marry as "der großartigste und hoffnungsreichste Rettungsversuch",(43) but it is certain he was motivated not only by the need to escape from his father but by an intense desire to prove himself worthy of society, and of Jewish society in particular. Strictly speaking, it was, however, an alternative and not wholly satisfactory solution to his problem, for the essential prerequisite to membership of any religious community is belief, and of this Kafka was incapable. If a Jew marries, he is fulfilling a Jewish ordinance; but if a non-Jew marries - and Kafka was to all intents and purposes a non-Jew - he is fulfilling nothing specifically Jewish. Certainly, he is not coming any nearer to Judaism. Yet, for the orthodox Jew, practice and belief are so closely related as to be almost indestinguishable, for Judaism, as Kafka

says, is "nicht nur eine Sache des Glaubens, sondern vor allem die Sache der Lebenspraxis einer durch den Glauben bestimmten Gemeinschaft."(44) And marriage and family life are among the most important expressions of this way of life. In May 1915, Kafka wrote in his diaries:

> Überlegung des Verhältnisses der andern zu mir. So wenig ich sein mag, niemand ist hier, der Verständnis für mich im ganzen hat. Einen haben, der dieses Verständnis hat, etwa eine Frau, das hieße Halt auf allen Seiten haben, Gott haben. (45)

Yet in this "Gott haben", we see the fundamental error in Kafka's attitude to marriage, for although the Rabbinic law states that the man who weds a good woman "has fulfilled all the precepts of the Torah", it is tacitly assumed that this man is a Jew and that, in matters other than marriage, he is not at odds with orthodox belief. Both Kafka and K. are indeed attempting, as William Wasserstrom states, "to achieve status, as defined in the Talmud",(46) but since neither is prepared to accept unconditionally the beliefs of the community which he hopes to enter, it is also an attempt not only to separate belief and practice, but to deceive the highest authority - be it God or the Castle - by giving an appearance of belief where none exists. Marriage represented a great many things for Kafka - normality, happiness, equality with his father, etc. - but he saw it also as a back door into Judaism, as a substitute for belief, and in this he was gravely mistaken. In that he sees marriage as a way towards God, Kafka is in agreement with the statements of the Rabbis in the Talmud, but in attempting to use it as a surrogate for faith, he flies in the face of Rabbinic law. Yet if his attitude to marriage was utilitarian, it must be

remembered that it derived primarily from his desire to create a place for himself in society, a place among the Jews, and ultimately, a place in Heaven. If his approach was wrong, it may be said on his behalf that he had no alternative. Denied love but seeking love, denied a people but seeking a people, and finally, denied faith but seeking faith, he laid his hopes not in the reality but in the symbol; and this symbol was marriage; for to have a wife was to have love, to have a people, to have God:

> Die Frau, noch schärfer ausgedrückt vielleicht die Ehe, ist der Repräsentant des Lebens, mit dem du dich auseinandersetzen sollst. (47)

> Eheschließen heißt vielmehr, in der Voraussetzung scharf und streng definiert: sicher sein. (48)

It is this attitude to marriage which Brod sees as symptomatic of the "illusory spirit of the psychology of assimilation", and which determines the course of all of K.'s relationships with women in "Das Schloß".

The first of these relationships is with Frieda, the barmaid at the Herrenhof Inn. Since Frieda is by far the most important female character in the novel, it will perhaps prove useful to correct a particularly dangerous mistake made by Max Brod. Throughout his writings on "Das Schloß", Brod has maintained that Kafka's model for Frieda was Milena Jesenska, the Czech translator of Kafka's works, and the woman to whom the "Briefe an Milena" are addressed. The mistake is "dangerous" not merely because it obscures the (in fact quite clear) autobiographical element in the novel, but because, since Milena was a Christian, K. can only be identified with

Jewry and the village with the Gentile world. This is, of course, entirely in keeping with Brod's interpretation of the novel - he is at least consistent - but there is hardly any evidence to support his comparison. In order to make the point clear, it is necessary to quote the relevant passage from Brod's biography in full:

> Im Roman vom "Schloß" kann man die Liebesbeziehung Kafkas zu Milena mit seltsamer Skepsis und in pejorativer Weise wider= gespiegelt finden, eine eigenartige heftige Deformation der Geschehnisse, die vielleicht allein ihn aus der Krise retten konnte. Milena, im Roman in höchst karikierter Gestalt als "Frieda" auftretend, tut entscheidende Schritte, um Kafka (K.) zu retten; sie verbündet sich mit ihm, begründet mit ihm einen Hausstand in Armut und Entsagung, aber fröhlich und entschlossen, sie will für immer die Seine sein und ihn gerade dadurch in die Naivität und Unmittelbarkeit des wahren Lebens zurückführen, - aber sowie K. einschlägt, die dargebotene Hand ergreift, melden sich die früheren Bindungen, die die Frau beeinflussen (das "Schloß", das Volkstum, die Gesellschaft, vor allem aber der geheimnisvolle Herr Klamm, in dem man ein übersteigertes und dämonisiertes Schreckbild des legalen Gatten zu sehen hat, von dem Milena innerlich nicht loskam) das erträumte Glück findet ein rasches Ende. (49)

Kafka's "affair" with Milena, whom he met on not more than three occasions, lasted from the Summer of 1920 until the Summer of 1923, and it cannot be denied that during this period he was working on "Das Schloß". One might reasonably expect, therefore, to find some allusion in the novel to the relationship, but the question is: where? Kafka, we know, had conceived the idea of writing a novel similar in theme to "Das Schloß" as early as 1914. A longish first draft appears in his diaries on June 11th,

under the title "Verlockung im Dorf". At that time, he was engaged to Felice Bauer. Brod, however, makes no mention in his interpretation of "Das Schloß" of Kafka's engagement, of the five most decisive years in the author's life, although, in view of Kafka's known interest in anagrams and cryptographs, and the obvious play on names - Frieda : Felice - some comparison does seem to suggest itself. Further, it seems strange that while the Milena affair only came to an end in 1923, Frieda appears in the very first chapters of the novel and has abandoned K. long before its end. The story of Amalia - an almost perfect anagram of Milena - begins, on the other hand, at the point where K.'s relationship with Frieda ends. If one were to identify Frieda as Felice and Amalia as Milena, K.'s affairs would correspond at least chronologically with Kafka's. Since Amalia is an outcast, with whose cause K. associates himself, and whose fate clearly corresponds with his own, it would then also follow that the village represented Jewry - Milena being a Christian - and that K. was an alien not among the Gentiles but the Jews.

Brod rightly states that Frieda takes decisive steps to save K., that she sets up house with him and remains cheerful and resolute despite poverty and renunciation. Yet there is no trace of an echo here of Kafka's relationship with Milena. If Frieda is a "caricature" of Milena, then Kafka's abilities in this particular art were extremely limited, for while in the caricature, distinctive features are exaggerated in order to be more easily recognised, in the figure of Frieda no single aspect of Milena's character or of her rôle in Kafka's life can be detected. Brod's reference to the Frieda-K. household is particularly unfortunate, for it is quite clear

that Kafka is alluding here to the home which he hoped to find for himself and F.B. in Berlin in 1916. In the novel the scene of K.'s domestic bliss consists of two schoolrooms which go with his post as school janitor. Here K. and Frieda set up house. It is, however, a singularly undemocratic ménage, for while K. wanders the village in search of Klamm, Frieda not only does all the janitor's work, but ensures that her fiancé enjoys pleasant surroundings and good food. Of his proposed marriage to Felice Bauer, Kafka wrote in 1916 to Max Brod:

> Will man sich allerdings das Verhältnis anschaulich darstellen, so ergibt sich der Anblick zweier Zimmer, etwa in Karlshorst, in einem steht F. früh auf, läuft weg und fällt abends müde ins Bett; in dem andern steht ein Kanapee, auf dem ich liege und mich von Milch und Honig nähre. Da liegt und streckt sich dann der unmoralische Mann. (50)

Brod's final point is that in Frieda's eventual break with K., there can be seen Milena's break with Kafka in 1923, and that the barmaid's decision to abandon her fiancé is made as soon as she begins to feel the old ties (in Milena's case, her husband) reasserting themselves. Here again, there is no real parallel, for Kafka's relationship with Milena ended, not because she suddenly felt bound to her husband, but because her relationship with the Prague author was completely unsatisfactory. Nowhere in Kafka's works do his neurotic fear of sex, his complete inability to take decisions and his all-pervading "Angst" appear so clearly as in the "Briefe an Milena":

> Wenn man "strach" [sexual fear] und "touha" [desire] so einschränkt, wie Du es im letzten Brief tust, dann ist die Frage nicht leicht aber sehr einfach zu beantworten. Dann habe ich nur "strach". (51)

K., on the other hand, is determined and utterly self-confident in his relationships with women, relationships which do not simply pall as did Kafka's with Milena, but which he actively destroys by his callous and purely utilitarian attitude. From start to finish, K.'s relationship with Frieda is an almost exact reproduction of the author's relationship with Felice Bauer. Compare Kafka's description of his first meeting with F. with that of K.'s first encounter with Frieda:

> Fräulein F.B. Als ich am 13. August zu Brod kam, saß sie bei Tisch und kam mir doch wie ein Dienstmädchen vor. Ich war auch gar nicht neugierig darauf, wer sie war, sondern fand mich sofort mit ihr ab. Knochiges leeres Gesicht, das seine Leere offen trug. Freier Hals. Überworfene Bluse. Ich entfremde ihr ein wenig dadurch, daß ich ihr so nahe an den Leib gehe. Fast zerbrochene Nase. Blondes, etwas steifes reizloses Haar, starkes Kinn. Während ich mich setzte, sah ich sie zum erstenmal genauer an, als ich saß, hatte ich schon ein unerschütterliches Urteil. ("Tagebücher"). (52)

> Das Bier wurde von einem jungen Mädchen ausgeschenkt, das Frieda hieß. Ein unscheinbares, kleines blondes Mädchen mit traurigen Augen und mageren Wangen, das aber durch ihren Blick überraschte, einen Blick von besonderer Überlegenheit. Als dieser Blick auf K. fiel, schien es ihm, daß dieser Blick schon K. betreffende Dinge erledigt hatte, von deren Vorhandensein aber der Blick ihn überzeugte. K. hörte nicht auf, Frieda von der Seite anzusehen, auch als sie schon mit Olga sprach. Sie lehnte neben K. und ordnete spielerisch, wie K. jetzt erst auffiel, ihre leichte, ausgeschnittene, cremefarbige Bluse, die wie fremd auf ihrem armen Körper lag. (53)

Here, as in "Das Urteil" and "Der Prozeß", the blouse appears as a

symbol of lust; in both of these works the principal female character (the fictional F.B. and Fräulein Bürstner) is modelled on Felice Bauer. There are many other points of comparison - the suffering and unhappiness which K. inflicts upon Frieda, his dedication to his vocation and her desire to build a normal home, the loveless nature of their relationship, etc., but since a full description of Kafka's engagement to F.B. has already been given in Chapter V, it would be superfluous to repeat it in this section. It is, however, worth noting that, fifteen months after her engagement with Kafka had come to an end, F.B. married an orthodox Eastern Jew and that by 1920, when Kafka was working on "Das Schloß", she was "die glückliche Mutter zweier Kinder".(54) It is perhaps not unreasonable to see in Frieda's return to Klamm and in her affection for the two assistants, who are constantly referred to as children, some reflection of this situation. Kafka received the news of F.'s marriage calmly. He was fully aware that there had never been any real prospect of happiness for either of them, that the break had been inevitable:

> Nun war es also doch geschehen, was vorauszusehen, aber nicht zu verhindern gewesen war. Frieda hatte ihn verlassen. (55)

Having established with reasonable certainty that Kafka's model for Frieda was Felice Bauer and not Milena Jesenska, we must now proceed to relate K.'s attitude to Frieda in "Das Schloß" to Kafka's attitude to marriage in general.

Firstly, K. sees Frieda as a convenient intermediary between himself and Klamm, whom we will assume for the moment to represent God - the point

will, of course, be developed later - for Frieda enjoys the reputation, whether with any justification or not, of having been Klamm's mistress. This particular aspect of the novel - the sexual relationships which exist between the Castle officials and the girls in the village - has struck horror into the hearts of both the religious and the humanist interpreters of Kafka's works; but the problem does not really exist. Man's relationship with God has often been expressed in erotic terms, most notably in Baroque poetry, in German Romanticism (especially in Novalis) and in neo-Platonic religious mysticism. Further, in Jewish theology, the celibate life is seen as the unblessed life, and woman as living in a state of almost perfect harmony with the deity, a state which, in secular terms, may most reasonably be compared to the state of marriage. Woman is thus morally and spiritually the superior of man, but, in marrying, man raises himself to her level and thus enters into a state of harmony with God. In his introduction to "Nashim" (Talmud), the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, writes:

> In the higher sphere of the soul's life, woman is the ethical and spiritual superior of man. A wife is a man's other self, all that man's nature demands for its completion, physically, socially and spiritually. In marriage alone can man's need for physical and social companionship be directed to holy ends. It is this idea which is expressed by the term "Kiddushim" [hallowing] applied to Jewish marriage - the hallowing of two human beings to life's holiest purposes. (56)

Similarly, in "Das Schloß", we find the following passage:

> Und dann gleich, ohne Möglichkeit der Besinnung, war Frieda gekommen, und mit ihr der noch heute unmöglich ganz

> aufzugebende Glaube, daß durch ihre Vermittlung eine fast körperliche, bis zur flüsternden Verständigung nahe Beziehung zu Klamm entstanden sei. (57)

Strictly speaking, this "almost physical" relationship to Klamm has not merely "come about" but has resulted from K.'s successful manipulation of events. In spite of Frieda's opinion that her marriage to K. is Klamm's will, the credit for having arranged the whole affair must go entirely to her fiancé. K. is not in love with Frieda; he is merely using her, or rather the technicality of his engagement to her, to justify himself in the eyes of Klamm and of the villagers. But if Frieda is unaware of this, the Castle authorities are not. In a protocol, drawn up by the secretary, Momus, - in mythology, the god of ridicule - K.'s true attitude to his future wife is made perfectly clear:

> Nur aus Berechnung schmutzigster Art hat K. sich an Frieda herangemacht und wird nicht von ihr lassen, solange er noch irgendwelche Hoffnung hat, daß seine Rechnung stimmt. Er glaubte nämlich, in ihr eine Geliebte des Herrn Vorstandes erobert zu haben und dadurch ein Pfand zu besitzen, das nur zum höchsten Preise ausgelöst werden kann. Über diesen Preis mit dem Herrn Vorstand zu verhandeln ist jetzt sein einziges Streben. Da ihm an Frieda nichts, am Preise alles liegt, ist er hinsichtlich Friedas zu jedem Entgegenkommen bereit, hinsichtlich des Preises aber gewiß hartnäckig. (58)

Kafka here castigates K., and through K., himself, for his purely utilitarian attitude to women and to marriage, for having attempted to use his fiancée as a bribe to Klamm. And yet K.'s "price" is not unduly high;

he seeks only recognition, a place in the community, and the rights and duties that go with membership:

> Durch die Heirat gewann er eine andere, bessere Sicherheit - Gemeindemitglied - Rechte und Pflichten - kein Fremder. (59)

But the marriage never takes place; K. returns home from the Barnabas house to find that Frieda has left him, that the "inevitable" has happened. Thus his last hope of justifying himself in the community disappears. The reasons for Frieda's decisions are never fully explained but it seems clear that by his utilitarian and loveless attitude to his fiancée, K. has destroyed the one relationship which might have benefited his cause. Frieda, who has been socially ruined by her association with the alien K. - again a specifically Jewish allusion - returns to Klamm. In a letter to Milena, Kafka wrote of his engagement to F.B.:

> Fast fünf Jahre habe ich auf sie eingehauen (oder, wenn Sie wollen, auf mich) nun, glücklicherweise, sie war unzerbrechlich, preußisch-jüdische Mischung, eine starke sieghafte Mischung. Ich war nicht so kräftig, allerdings hatte sie nur zu leiden, während ich schlug und litt. (60)

Between 1912 and 1924, Kafka met three women whom he was prepared to marry. They were Felice Bauer, Jenny W. and Dora Diamant. All three came from orthodox Jewish families; two were Zionists. Had he married any of these women, Kafka might have succeeded in breaking down the barriers which stood between himself and Eastern Jewry; but all these relationships

ended disastrously. In the cases of Felice Bauer and Jenny W., he was defeated by his own incapacity; in the case of Dora Diamant, by national and religious prejudices. The way to God and to society through marriage thus remained closed to Kafka, as it does to his hero K. Yet this was neither the only way, nor the most direct. The true way to God or to a society "conditioned by faith" is faith itself. In the final section, we will therefore examine the reasons for K.'s failure to create a place for himself in a village "conditioned by faith".

"Der Himmel ist stumm, nur dem Stummen Widerhall":(61) Klamm.

In a conversation with Gustav Janouch, Kafka said:

> Die Sprache ist der tönende Atem der Heimat. Ich - ich bin aber ein schwerer Asthmatiker, da ich weder tschechisch noch hebräisch kann. Beide lerne ich. Das ist aber so, als ob man einem Traum nachlaufen würde. Wie kann man außen etwas finden, das aus dem Innern kommen soll? (62)

Here, in essence, we see the problem with which K. must come to terms in "Das Schloß", for his various attempts at self-justification - through profession, marriage, etc., - which we described in the previous sections, are symptomatic of an attitude to society which seeks to substitute the purely superficial tokens of membership for something, "das aus dem Innern kommen soll" - for faith in those things in which the community has faith, for a spontaneous and natural acceptance of its traditions and beliefs; and, in the passage cited above, Kafka is speaking not of

Gentiledom, but of Jewry, not of Czech Prague, but of Zion. In Kafka's Hebrew studies, we may thus see a last, despairing attempt to find some point of contact with Eastern Judaism, to justify his "silent presence" among the Jews. His failure to do just this is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the events of 1923, by his sense of alienation among the members of the "Berliner Jüdisches Volksheim" who received him, if not discourteously, "als Gast, als Fremder",(63) and finally by the "Gerer Rebbe's" "No", by his rejection of Kafka as one totally unacceptable as a husband for an orthodox Eastern-Jewish girl. Behind this rejection there lay not only the Eastern Jew's contempt for his Western counterpart, not only his sense of inherent spiritual superiority but, perhaps above all, his fear of the unorthodox, of what is different, alien and a threat. The insular nature of such non-proselytising national and religious groups as Jewry is conditioned primarily by the need to protect the cabbala, by the fear that the alien will corrupt or undermine the beliefs not only of those with whom he comes into direct contact, but of the community as a whole. It is for this reason that the Rabbinic law on marriage and intermarriage is so strict, for the more intimate the relationship, the greater the danger. When the landlady of the Bridge Inn weeps for her "daughter", Frieda, who has abandoned Klamm for K., her tears reflect the sorrow of any orthodox Jewish mother whose daughter has married "outside the faith" and whose spiritual and social welfare stands in danger. Thus, it is primarily fear which determines the villagers' attitude to K., as it is fear which determines their attitude to Amalia and her family; for both K. and Amalia challenge the morality, justice and infallibility of the Castle, thus unconsciously undermining the very

foundations of village life. In his acutely perceptive article, "Kafka and the Primacy of the Ethical", Frederick A. Olafson writes:

> It is now clear in what sense K. represents a danger to the villagers. Because he persists in viewing his case as a miscarriage of justice, he revives in the villagers the tensions that are produced by a felt inconsistency between their general assumption that the Castle is always right and the perhaps never quite suppressed deliverance of their own moral consciousness. K.'s attitude amounts to a kind of moral aggression against the villagers and he is, by his unconsciously simple-minded demands, challenging the moral structure of village life. (64)

The village to which K. comes seeking membership must indeed be seen as a "community conditioned by faith": faith in the Castle and, above all, faith in Klamm whose rôle in the novel we must now examine.

Klamm is described by the villagers in terms which suggest that he is God. In a passage from the novel which Kafka eventually deleted, the landlady of the Bridge Inn says to K.: "niemanden lieben wir als den Beamten Klamm, den hohen, den überaus hohen Beamten"(65) - a statement which reflects not only her own and Frieda's attitude to the "exceedingly high official", but also that of every member of the village community. This love of Klamm might, of course, represent nothing more than the purely natural love of a woman for a man, were it not that to have been Klamm's mistress is seen by the villagers as the highest of all human achievements, and that a clear contrast is drawn throughout the novel between what one might call "love of neighbour" and love for Klamm. Thus, in the case of the

landlady herself, her "entsetzliche Treue"(66) to Klamm - an allusion perhaps to the "terrible fidelity" of Abraham - leaves no room in her heart for any feeling of love towards her husband. These are only pointers, but there is much else which seems to confirm that Klamm's nature is divine. Not only is his name sacrosanct - on one occasion K. is asked not to use the name but to say "him" - but the villagers speak of Klamm's grace, of his blessing, of sinning against Klamm and of his spirit which fills everything to which he assents. Nor is K. any less aware of Klamm's infinite superiority than the villagers for, in a conversation with Frieda and the landlady he calls himself "ein Nichts in Klamms Augen".(67) Finally, in a passage which must surely dispel all doubts as to Kafka's intention in depicting Klamm, K. compares him to an eagle:

> Er dachte an seine Ferne, an seine uneinnehmbare Wohnung, an seine, nur vielleicht von Schreien, wie sie K. noch nie gehört hatte, unterbrochene Stummheit, an seinen herab= dringenden Blick, der sich niemals nachweisen, niemals widerlegen ließ, an seine von K.s Tiefe her unzerstörbaren Kreise, die er oben nach unverständlichen Gesetzen zog, nur für Augenblicke sichtbar: das alles war Klamm und dem Adler gemeinsam. (68)

Yet if Klamm is God, he is certainly not God manifest but, for K. at least, an utterly remote and totally inaccessible figure whose main occupation is sleep, who never speaks to anyone and to whom the sight of man, and of K. in particular, is unbearable. He is thus a personification of the essential nature of the deity as it appeared to Kafka, for the tragedy of Kafka's religious position, as we have seen in Chapter VI and in the

section "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" in Chapter VIII was that while he sought desperately to believe, to make the "leap of faith", God, as it were, turned his back on him, remained silent and hidden. In the "Acht Oktavhefte", we find the following entries:

> Du beklagst dich über die Stille, über die Aussichtslosigkeit der Stille, die Mauer des Guten. (69)
>
> Das Böse weiß vom Guten, aber das Gute vom Bösen nicht. (70)
>
> Wir sind von Gott beiderseitig getrennt: der Sündenfall trennt uns von ihm, der Baum des Lebens trennt ihn von uns. (71)

Here, as in the figure of Klamm in "Das Schloß" and of the Emperor in "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer", we see the hidden God, the "Deus Absconditus" of Pascal's "Pensées". It must be noted, however, that while the narrator of "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" reaches the conclusion that man must accept the limitations of human reason, and advocates an attitude of faith, the hero of "Das Schloß" is prepared neither to sacrifice his reason to the infallibility of the Castle nor to accept that Klamm's remoteness is either necessary or impregnable. K., who describes himself as not belonging "zu den Schüchternen"(72) and who in an almost Nietzschean moment, refers to the occupant of the Castle as "ein trübseliger Hausbewohner, der gerechterweise im entlegensten Zimmer des Hauses sich hatte eingesperrt halten sollen",(73) remains rational and sceptical throughout the novel. That his position as village land-surveyor is not recognised, that he is refused an interview with Klamm and that he must wear himself out in vain attempts to establish some form of contact with the Castle, K. regards not as

showing that village and Castle life are incompatible, and that human and divine values do not always correspond, but as symptoms of "das lächerliche Gewirre, welches unter Umständen über die Existenz eines Menschen entscheidet".(74)

Similarly, he is more inclined to regard Klamm's forgetfulness - a further indication of his inaccessibility - as a legend than as a reality which can be put to the test of experience. When K. expresses this opinion, the landlady of the Bridge Inn replies:

> Es ist keine Legende, es ist vielmehr der allgemeinen Erfahrung entnommen. Vielleicht ist es außerdem auch noch eine Legende, dann aber ist sie gewiß nur von den Verlassenen erfunden, als Trost ihres Lebens. (75)

It is interesting to note that in his final draft, Kafka deleted the second half of this passage; for his decision whether or not to delete a particular passage in any of his works was apparently determined not only by linguistic or stylistic considerations but also by an almost neurotic desire to avoid explicit or unambiguous formulations of his hero's and, more particularly, of his own dilemma, to conceal the autobiographical element in the story, the "Zeugnisse der Einsamkeit". The deleted passages thus provide the critic with a unique insight into the meaning of any work and its biographical significance. Such is the case with the passage quoted above. Until 1917, Kafka, in common with all atheists, will have found no difficulty in explaining the infinitely remote nature of God and his refusal to reveal himself to man: God simply did not exist. After 1917, however, Kafka's religious position changed radically; he now made a conscious effort

(unsuccessful because of its very consciousness) to believe, but was dismayed to find that if he were striving to meet God face to face, as K. strives to meet Klamm, God was apparently indifferent to his efforts and remained as silent and as enigmatic as before. If he was to save his belief, Kafka had therefore to reinterpret God's silence in religious terms and this he did by reference to Pascal's doctrine of the "Deus Absconditus". Seen objectively, the situation had not changed at all. On one point both Kafka, the atheist, and Kafka, the believer, were agreed: that no man had seen God. That was, in the landlady's words, "der allgemeinen Erfahrung entnommen".(76) Certainly it was Kafka's experience. But while, before 1917, Kafka had looked into the void and said "It is a void", he now said "It is a void, but only apparently". But for Kafka, a man prone to scepticism and always the victim of his own doubt, this formulation cannot have proved entirely convincing or satisfactory. He had turned to Pascal, or more accurately to the whole realm of theology, not spontaneously but because he felt "abandoned" and because he desperately required an explanation of this abandonment. Thus, still under the influence of Nietzsche and aware that he had consciously used Pascal's postulate to save his own belief, Kafka may well have felt in 1920 that, whatever foundation it might have in reality, whatever place it might have in the experience of others, the doctrine of the hidden God was for him merely a legend, a legend which he had invented because he had been abandoned, "als Trost [seines] Lebens". There is, of course, a paradox here, for according to the landlady, Klamm's forgetfulness is both legendary and the result of general experience. The paradox may be explained in terms of the atheists' and the believers'

differing attitudes to the doctrine of the "Deus Absconditus". But the irony of the situation is that Kafka is commenting on a belief, as a believer, but with all the scepticism of a militant atheist. This then is Kafka's final position vis-à-vis God, as it is K.'s vis-à-vis Klamm. In a moment of prophetic insight, Kafka wrote in his diaries in February 1915:

> Wäre ich ein Fremder, der mich und den Verlauf meines Lebens beobachtet, müßte ich sagen, daß alles in Nutzlosigkeit enden muß, verbraucht in unaufhörlichem Zweifel, schöpferisch nur in Selbstquälerei. (77)

A more direct expression of Kafka's scepticism, of the Nietzschean-cum-Freudian attitude to God which he had taken during his school and university days and which, in spite of himself, he was never able to reject fully, can be seen in the following passage from "Das Schloß":

> Aber natürlich ist sein Aussehen im Dorf bekannt, einzelne haben ihn gesehen, alle von ihm gehört, und es hat sich aus dem Augenschein, aus Gerüchten und auch manchen fälschenden Nebenabsichten ein Bild Klamms ausgebildet, das wohl in den Grundzügen stimmt. Aber nur in den Grundzügen. Sonst ist es veränderlich und vielleicht nicht einmal so veränderlich wie Klamms wirkliches Aussehen. Er soll ganz anders aussehen, wenn er ins Dorf kommt, und anders, wenn er es verläßt, anders, ehe er Bier getrunken hat, anders nachher, anders im Wachen, anders im Schlafen, anders allein, anders im Gespräch und, was hiernach verständlich ist, fast grundverschieden oben im Schloß. Und es sind schon selbst innerhalb des Dorfes ziemlich große Unterschiede, die berichtet werden, Unterschiede der Größe, der Haltung, der Dicke, des Bartes. Nun gehen natürlich alle diese Unterschiede auf keine Zauberei zurück,

> sondern sind sehr begreiflich, entstehen durch die Augen= blickliche Stimmung, den Grad der Aufregung, die unzähligen Abstufungen der Hoffnung oder Verzweiflung, in welcher sich der Zuschauer, der überdies meist nur augenblickweise Klamm sehen darf, befindet. (78)

In his extremely accurate analysis of "Das Schloß", Roy Pascal describes this passage as "one of the rare 'clues' in the novel",(79) and it is true that Kafka has here given a quite unambiguous formulation of the Freudian and Nietzschean hypothesis that there is no objective reality behind the concept of God, that the deity is merely a projection of man's need for spiritual dependence, of his fear of moral autonomy and of his desire to place the ultimate responsibility for life and death, good and evil in the hands of a creator, infinitely superior to and wiser than himself. The fluctuations in Klamm's appearance which Olga attempts to explain as dependent on the mood of the observer, might be seen as referring to the existence of an almost infinite variety of interpretations of God's nature and appearance, interpretations which are determined by the theological, historical and even geographical standpoint of the "observer". It is clear, however, that if Klamm's appearance is dependent on man's mood, or on the "degree of his excitement", there must be some doubt as to whether he has any existence independent of that purely subjective existence in the minds of the villagers, whether, in fact, he is not merely a figment of the imagination, created, not creating. This doubt is not, however, restricted to Klamm, but extends to the Castle itself and it is expressed in the opening paragraph of the novel:

> Es war spät abends, als K. ankam. Das Dorf lag in tiefem Schnee. Vom Schloßberg war nichts zu sehen, Nebel und Finsternis

> umgaben ihn, auch nicht der schwächste Lichtschein deutete das große Schloß an. Lange stand K. auf der Holzbrücke, die von der Landstraße zum Dorf führte, und blickte in die scheinbare Leere empor. (79a)

But is the emptiness "illusory"? - does the Castle in fact exist or is it not also a projection of the villagers' need for spiritual dependence, of man's need for God? Certainly there is considerable evidence in the novel that this is the case. That the Castle and the village are one, is in itself an indication that there is no qualitative difference between them, that the Castle is merely an extension of the village. Roy Pascal comments:

> This infinite hierarchy of tedious and hysterical officials with their purposeless labour is only the superstructure of sanctions, the fetish, that the village creates for its own confirmation and comfort. (80)

This idea also occurs to K. himself:

> Hätte man nicht gewußt, daß es ein Schloß sei, hätte man es für ein Städtchen halten können. Es war doch nur ein recht elendes Städtchen, aus Dorfhäusern zusammengetragen, ausgezeichnet nur dadurch, daß vielleicht alles aus Stein gebaut war; aber der Anstrich war längst abgefallen und der Stein schien abzubröckeln. (81)

The description here is reminiscent of that of the tea-house in "In der Strafkolonie" in which, as we saw in Chapter VII, the body of the Old Commandant, of the "dead God" lay buried. Nor is it a coincidence that this similarity should exist, for in "Das Schloß" as in "In der Strafkolonie"

the influence of Nietzsche can be felt. It would, however, be misleading to suggest an exact parallel between the two works, for while in "In der Strafkolonie" the reader is presented with the "death of God" and the consequent and inevitable decay of conscience as an established fact, in "Das Schloß" Kafka leaves the question open. K. does not find himself in the same position as the explorer. It is neither his task nor his wish to commit the deity to eternal oblivion, to "murder God". On the contrary, he seeks recognition from Klamm and through that recognition the undeniable right to settle in the village. Thus he sets out to obtain a personal interview, to meet Klamm. It is his failure to do either that most accurately reflects the tragedy of Kafka's final religious position. If that tragedy was averted to some extent by Kafka's inherent scepticism, it was aggravated by his dogged determination not to abandon his search for God:

> Trotz allem, was geschehen war, hatte er das Gefühl, daß das, was er bisher erreicht hatte, eine Art Besitz war, den er zwar nur noch scheinbar festhielt, aber doch nicht auf einen beliebigen Befehl hin ausliefern mußte. "Sie verfehlen ihn auf jeden Fall, ob Sie warten oder gehen", sagte der Herr, zwar schroff in seiner Meinung, aber auffallend nachgiebig für K.s Gedankengang. "Dann will ich ihn lieber beim Warten verfehlen", sagte K. trotzig. (82)

Having attempted to give a satisfactory account of the relationship between K. and Klamm, and of its significance in the history of Kafka's religious development, we must now turn to a far more controversial issue, to the story of Amalia and Sortini.

The Amalia Episode.

It is doubtful whether any other passage in Kafka's work has provoked or will ever provoke more heated argument in critical circles than that in "Das Schloß" in which Kafka describes the tragic downfall of the Barnabas family, which occurs after the daughter Amalia has refused the sordid and peremptory overtures of the Castle official, Sortini. The argument revolves around three points: firstly, does Kafka allude in the Amalia episode to the story of Abraham and Isaac, as it appears in Kierkegaard's "Fear and Trembling"; secondly, where do Kafka's sympathies lie, with Amalia or Sortini; thirdly, is it reasonable, in view of the Amalia episode, to equate the Castle with divine grace? In answer to these questions, we will suggest that it is reasonable to regard the Amalia story as alluding to that of Abraham and Isaac; that Kafka's and his hero's sympathies undoubtedly lie with Amalia; and that, far from identifying the Castle with divine grace, Kafka here presents the severest indictment of Abraham, of blind faith and, ultimately, of God.

The history of Kafka's religious development moves, as we have seen in Chapter VI, in an almost cyclic manner. Kafka progresses from atheism to religious extremism, to a more orthodox, and perhaps less demanding attitude to faith and finally, as we shall attempt to show here, to a position totally opposed to that of Kierkegaard. His final position may not, however, be described as atheistic. It is, rather, characterised by a willingness to believe, tempered by extreme scepticism, by a total unwillingness to accept the irrational or absurd by blind faith.

In his controversial article on Kafka in "The Disinherited Mind",

Erich Heller, referring to those interpretations which see the Amalia episode and the story of Abraham and Isaac as parallels, writes:

> This is, for the believer, downright blasphemy, and a critical insult to the intelligence of a reader able to read for himself the Bible, Kierkegaard and Kafka. The sacrifice of Isaac a parallel to Sortini's designs on Amalia? But this means, without any polemical exaggeration, to ascribe to the God of Abraham a personal interest in the boy Isaac, worthy rather of a Greek demi-god. (83)

In an otherwise sound article, it is unfortunate to find such an example of puritanism and peremptory dogmatism as this. One might suggest that the believer, as such, has as little place in literary criticism as the rabid atheist. "Blasphemy" is not a critical term. Heller, as Ronald Gray rightly observes,(84) takes Brod's (it was originally Brod's) analogy somewhat too literally when he speaks of God's "personal interest in the boy Isaac". This is surely a piece of pedantic hair-splitting. There <u>is</u> a basic similarity between the two episodes and that is certainly all that Brod meant to imply. In both cases, an unethical act is required of a human being by a higher authority which gives no explanation for its actions but, in an apparently whimsical frame of mind, seeks to put that human being to the test of faith. And what if Sortini's interest in Amalia <u>is</u> sexual? Since the relationship with God is expressed throughout the novel in erotic terms, is it not logical that an abuse of that relationship should be portrayed as a sexual abuse? If Kafka's formulation of the Abraham problem is not orthodox - and no one would suggest that either it or his interpretation of Kierkegaard was orthodox - it is at least consistent with the rest of his

symbolism. Further, there is, as we have shown, some evidence to suggest that Kafka modelled Amalia on Milena Jesenska, and the course of his relationship with the Czech translator of his works does provide a certain insight into the Amalia episode. Milena, it must be remembered, was a Christian married to a Jew and in constant contact with Jews. On the whole Judaism disapproves of intermarriage, but since in Rabbinic law a child takes its religion from its mother, the marriage of a Jewish woman to a Christian man, though undesirable, is neither spiritually nor socially disastrous. The Christian woman who marries a Jewish man, on the other hand, may well find herself coolly received, if not actually ostracised by the Jewish community. This was the case with Milena and there may well be an echo of the situation in the Amalia episode in "Das Schloß". Ronald Gray is more inclined, however, to see the Barnabas family as Jews and the village as Gentiledom, though he admits this "can only be a guess".(85) The problem has already been discussed in this chapter but it is perhaps worth noting that Amalia's brother is called Barnabas, and that the name has specifically Christian associations. It would, however, be unwise to suggest a direct analogy between the Barnabas family and Christianity for the novel, as we have seen, deals primarily with the East-West Jewish problem. In the eyes of the orthodox Eastern Jew, the Western Jew was in any case just as contemptible a figure as the Christian. Here we are on surer ground, for K.'s slightly ambiguous relationship with the Barnabas family reflects Kafka's ambivalent attitude to West European Jewry. On his first arrival in the Barnabas household, K. reflects:

> Er hatte geglaubt, hier im Dorf habe jeder für ihn Bedeutung und es war wohl auch so, nur gerade diese Leute hier bekümmerten ihn gar nicht. (86)

But in spite of this indifference, which certainly reflects Kafka's lack of interest in the "Scheinjuden" of the Prague ghetto, K. finds that his fate is inseparably linked with that of the Barnabas family, that the Castle authorities have, in a sense, played them off against one another, that he has no sense of shame in the Barnabas household and that, in spite of himself, he feels an actual sense of nearness to them. In Kafka's diaries for 1913, we find the following entry:

> Vorvorgestern mit Weiss, Verfasser der "Galeere". Jüdischer Arzt, Jude von der Art, die dem Typus des westeuropäischen Juden am nächsten ist und dem man sich deshalb gleich nahe fühlt. (87)

Thus, however much he may have regretted it, Kafka's fate was inseparably linked with that of the Western Jews.

It is, however, with the fate of Amalia and of the Barnabas family that we are primarily concerned at the moment. The details of Sortini's lascivious summons to Amalia and of her spirited reaction will be known to the reader and need not be reiterated here; sufficient to say that Sortini's letter was nauseating and peremptory and that in human terms, Amalia's refusal was not only morally justified, but morally necessary. The question which Kafka now poses is, in essence, the Kierkegaardian question: can an unethical action be justified by reference to a higher religious duty to God; can there be a teleological suspension of the ethical? To this question, two answers may be found in "Das Schloß", the one given by the villagers, the other by K.

The reaction of the village to the news that Amalia has torn up

Sortini's summons is uncompromising and unequivocal. Not only Amalia but the whole Barnabas family is immediately and totally ostracised:

> Nun sprach man von uns nicht mehr wie von Menschen, unser Familienname wurde nicht mehr genannt; wenn man von uns sprechen mußte, nannte man uns nach Barnabas, dem Unschuldigsten von uns, selbst unsere Hütte geriet in Verruf und, wenn du dich prüfst, wirst du gestehen, daß auch du beim ersten Eintritt die Berechtigung dieser Verachtung zu merken glaubtest; später, als wieder manchmal Leute zu uns kamen, rümpften sie die Nase über ganz belanglose Dinge, etwa darüber, daß die kleine Öllampe dort über dem Tisch hing. Alles was wir waren und hatten, traf die gleiche Verachtung. (88)

Yet it is not religious zeal, not even righteous indignation that determines the village attitude, but fear: fear of contamination, of being associated with the Barnabas affair, fear of unorthodox or independent thought and thus, ultimately, fear of the Castle. It is the villagers' instinct for spiritual self-preservation and not an order from the Castle that condemns the Barnabas family to a life of loneliness and misery:

> Während man aber den Rückzug der Leute natürlich merkte, war vom Schloß gar nichts zu merken. Diese Ruhe war das Schlimmste. Bei weitem nicht der Rückzug der Leute, sie hatten es ja nicht aus irgendeiner Überzeugung getan, hatten vielleicht auch gar nichts Ernstliches gegen uns, die heutige Verachtung bestand noch gar nicht, nur aus Angst hatten sie es getan, und jetzt warteten sie, wie es weiter ausgehen werde. (89)

It must be clear that in all of this Kafka is making the most severe indictment of blind faith and of those religions which deny to the

individual a reasonable autonomy of thought and of action. It is probable that Kafka's failure to break down the barriers between himself and Eastern Jewry left him with a justifiable feeling of bitterness which he expresses in the novel. He also seems to suggest that it is fear of God (in the non-Biblical sense) rather than love for God which impels society to reject those who are unorthodox and refuse to conform; it is a fear which comes uncomfortably close to the primitive fear of the vengeance of the gods, but whose modern expressions are religious bigotry, intolerance and narrow-mindedness.

Thus, for whatever reasons, the villagers' answer to the Kierkegaardian question is that there not only can but must be a teleological suspension of the ethical, that faith involves the surrender of reason. It is in K.'s reaction to the Amalia story that we can see the most essential difference between his approach and theirs and that Kafka's final religious position is manifested, for K. regards Sortini's summons as an offence against Amalia's inherent morality and as an unparalleled and monstrous abuse of personal power:

> Das Allerhäßlichste an der Geschichte ist ja nicht die Beleidigung Amalias. Sortini hat nicht Amalia bloßgestellt, sondern sich selbst. Vor Sortini also schrecke ich zurück, vor der Möglichkeit, daß es einen solchen Mißbrauch der Macht gibt. Was in diesem Fall mißlang, weil es klipp und klar gesagt und völlig durchsichtig war und an Amalia einen überlegenen Gegner fand, kann in tausend anderen Fällen, bei nur ein wenig ungünstigeren Fällen, völlig gelingen und kann sich jedem Blick entziehen, auch dem Blick des Mißbrauchten. (90)

K. thus appears as the defender of the ethical, and Amalia not as

an Abraham but as an "anti-Abraham", as a woman whose strength, whose "faith" and whose noble superiority lie in her having refused to sacrifice her personal ethic to the - in Kierkegaard's sense - "religious" ethic of the Castle. "Das Schloß" is not a novel about divine grace: neither from Klamm, the "Deus Absconditus", nor from Sortini, the god of Abraham can any act of grace be expected; and it is not grace that K. seeks but his rights. Yet if, in "Das Schloß", Kafka indicts both Abraham and his god, his indictment is of blind faith and not of belief. In the end, the novel tells the story of a man - Kafka or K. - who seeks to enter a community "conditioned by faith" and to justify his existence in the eyes of God - but not at any price.

Conclusion.

"Das Schloß" is Kafka's "summing-up". In this, his last and greatest work, there appear all the themes and motifs which are present in his other novels and short stories, but while in the earlier works each of these themes is treated independently, in "Das Schloß" each is related to two central themes, the themes of alienation and of self-justification in a community "conditioned by faith". Thus, in his last novel, Kafka treats of every major dilemma that has arisen during his life, of the problems of marriage, profession, literature, Judaism and belief. The autobiographical basis of the work may therefore be said to be the life of the author, Franz Kafka.

General Conclusion.

Franz Kafka's works are not directly autobiographical, that is to say, the characters and events which appear in his novels and short stories are not merely reproductions or photographic likenesses of people and situations from his own life. The works are, rather, complicated experiments or hypotheses, in which Kafka attempts to examine the logical outcome of one of a number of possible courses of action and thus to determine the ultimate effect which such a course of action would have upon his existence. In any one work we may therefore expect the hero's situation to have developed beyond the biographical circumstances underlying it, so that where there was a dilemma in Kafka's own life, that dilemma will have been overcome, at least superficially, in his hero's life. Kafka's heroes make the decisions which he himself was unable to make, but their almost inevitable destruction demonstrates that, for their creator, every decision and every course of action was impossible. Thus Georg Bendemann decides to marry, Gregor Samsa to continue life as a minor business-employee and Josef K. not to marry. In annihilating each of these men Kafka demonstrates the impossibility for him of marrying, of continuing to work as an insurance official and of not marrying. Ultimately, therefore, the works represent his "Beweis dessen, daß es unmöglich ist zu leben". Although the hypothetical technique is less apparent in "Amerika" and in "Das Schloß", in his last novel Kafka does examine the possibility of his being accepted by the East-European Jews. This too is rejected.

Thematically, Kafka progresses in his works from purely personal issues to questions which are of philosophical and religious significance.

One cannot therefore expect to find a single dominant theme running throughout his works, nor to be able to interpret them always in the same terms, without regard to the subject-matter or the author's stage of development at the time. Exclusively Freudian or exclusively religious interpretations cannot, by definition, give an accurate or complete picture since, while some of Kafka's works (most notably "Die Verwandlung" and "Der Prozeß") are clearly explicable in terms of Freudian psychology, others ("In der Strafkolonie", "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer" and "Das Schloß") reflect Kafka's religious position at various points throughout his life and must be treated as religious works. Until the end of 1917 Kafka may be regarded as a non-religious author and may be treated in whatever terms (biographical, psychological, metaphysical, etc.) seem most suitable to the critic; after that date, however, his theme is primarily religious. It is important that the two periods should not be placed under one heading, thus oversimplifying and distorting the picture.

In his earliest works ("Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung") Kafka treats of purely personal issues: his father, his family, marriage, his profession and his literary vocation. The autobiographical element in each of these works is on the whole apparent and they tend to suffer from the oversubjectivity of the author's approach.

In his first novel, "Amerika", Kafka deals with the traditional theme of the artist in society, but the purely personal issues - the father, Kafka's sense of guilt, etc. - are again dominant. "Amerika" is thus a hybrid work: superimposed upon the neurotic themes, so typical of Kafka, there is a veneer of Dickensian realism.

Marriage and Kafka's sense of guilt as an unmarried man are the principal themes in the final work from his non-religious period: "Der Prozeß". The novel is certainly the most tedious and obscure of Kafka's works, but exemplifies the endless speculation and situation-analysis that is a characteristic of all of Kafka's writing.

All of these works were written between 1912 and 1917. Whatever the specific issue involved (marriage, profession or literature), the principal theme is always the sense of guilt, the hero's bad conscience with regard to that issue. The driving force in each of these works is not the father but conscience which, having submitted to a period of repression, reappears in dramatic form and demands recognition. Unable to afford that recognition, or even to understand the nature of his "crime", each of these early heroes is martyred by his own, or more accurately, by Kafka's conscience. Ultimately, these are works of literary self-punishment, a form of spiritual masochism. They reflect Kafka's pathological attitude to himself and to the world, and anticipate the first of the religious works, "In der Strafkolonie".

Written in 1914 and revised in 1917, "In der Strafkolonie" provides the connecting link between the two fundamental stages in Kafka's religious development, between the atheism of his early years and the search for faith that characterises his later works. Both versions of the story treat of the Nietzschean doctrine of the "death of God" and of the subsequent and inevitable decay of conscience and of all moral values. In the 1914 version Kafka unwillingly expresses support for the humanitarian ideals of the new

rationalistic régime, in that he presents the machine of conscience as an outmoded and obsolete form of torture that brings neither enlightenment nor salvation to its victims. In the revised version of 1917 a change in Kafka's religious position becomes evident, since the officer, the sole advocate of the Old Commandant and of his invention, returns, triumphant, to life. Kafka's religious position at this stage is thus akin to that of Kierkegaard, Barth and Martin Buber, since he advocates an attitude of blind faith, emphasises the essential dichotomy of divine and human understanding, and sets up "religious" (in Kierkegaard's sense) rather than ethical criteria for judging human behaviour. The influence of Kierkegaard should not, however, be overestimated, since Kafka's acceptance of these criteria was not entirely spontaneous, but was determined in part by his inherently masochistic attitude to himself. His fundamental position at this stage is one of religious extremism.

A modifying and softening of these ideas may be seen in the short-story-cycle "Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer", in which an attitude of faith, though not of blind faith, is advocated. Having abandoned his former atheism, Kafka now reinterprets God's silence, his "death" in more orthodox terms, specifically in the terms of Pascal's "Pensées". In the figure of the Emperor, there may thus be seen the "Deus Absconditus" or hidden God.

Kafka's final religious position may be seen in his last novel "Das Schloß", in which the hero, K., appears as a defender of the ethical rather than of the "religious", in Kierkegaard's sense. Ultimately, therefore, Kafka may be seen as an anti-Abraham, as a man seeking faith and membership in a religious community, but not at any price.

In "Das Schloß", all the themes and motifs appear which are present in Kafka's other novels and short stories; it is his "summing-up". In this, his last and greatest work, Kafka thus treats of every major dilemma that has arisen during his life, of the problems of marriage, profession, literature, Judaism and belief. "Das Schloß" is therefore Kafka's "manifesto", a work whose autobiographical basis may only be said to be: the life of the author, Franz Kafka.

N O T E S.

In the case of passages from the works of Kafka quoted in the thesis, the page references given in these notes are to the nine-volume S. Fischer Verlag edition of Kafka's "Gesammelte Werke" (Lizenzausgabe von Schocken Books, New York), edited by Max Brod. The following abbreviations are used:

Kafka's "Gesammelte Werke"

A = "Amerika"	Frankfurt/M.,	1953
P = "Der Prozeß"	"	, 1960
S = "Das Schloß"	"	, 1955
BK = "Beschreibung eines Kampfes"	"	, 1954
E = "Erzählungen"	"	, 1946
H = "Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande"	"	, 1953
B = "Briefe"	"	, 1958
M = "Briefe an Milena"	"	, 1960
T = "Tagebücher"	"	, 1954.

Biography.

MB = Max Brod: "Franz Kafka : eine Biographie", third edition, Berlin and Frankfurt/M., 1954.

W = Klaus Wagenbach: "Franz Kafka : eine Biographie seiner Jugend", Bern, 1958.

J = Gustav Janouch: "Gespräche mit Kafka", Frankfurt/M., 1951.

Chapter I

1. The letter has, of course, no title and was never delivered. In order to distinguish between it and other letters written by Kafka, we shall refer to it throughout as the "Brief an den Vater" or "the Letter".
2. e.g. Charles Neider, Paul Goodman, Hellmuth Kaiser, Peter Dow Webster.
3. Brod's Biography is, of course, the main, if not the most reliable source of information on Kafka.
4. H, p. 348.
5. T, p. 229.
6. T, p. 248.
7. H, p. 203.
8. MB, p. 25.
9. T, p. 194 f.
10. Heinz Politzer: "Letter to His Father", in "Franz Kafka Today", edited by Angel Flores and Homer Swander, Madison, 1958, p. 236.
11. H, p. 221 f.
12. H, p. 164.
13. H, p. 165 f.
14. H, p. 164.
15. H, p. 166.
16. H, p. 181.
17. H, p. 180 f.
18. H, p. 176.
19. H, p. 195 f.
20. H, p. 199.

21. H, p. 201 f.

22. Klaus Mann: Preface to Franz Kafka's "Amerika", Norfolk, Conn. (n.d.), p. xi.

23. Frederick J. Hoffman: "Escape from Father", in "The Kafka Problem", edited by Angel Flores, New York, 1946, p. 231.

24. H, p. 204.

25. H, p. 207.

26. H, p. 207.

27. T, p. 41.

28. T, p. 320.

29. op. cit., p. 222.

30. H, p. 208.

31. MB, p. 170.

32. H, p. 209 f.

33. T, p. 311 f.

34. H, p. 217 f.

Chapter II

1. Wilhelm Emrich: "Franz Kafka", Bonn, 1958, p. 78.

2. Claude-Edmonde Magny: "The Objective Depiction of Absurdity", in "The Kafka Problem", p. 76.

3. MB, p. 119.

4. T, p. 160.

5. T, p. 555.

6. T, p. 310 f.

7. T, p. 297: "Georg hat so viel Buchstaben wie Franz. In Bendemann ist 'mann' nur eine für alle noch unbekannten Möglichkeiten der Geschichte vorgenommene Verstärkung von 'Bende'. Bende aber hat ebenso viele Buchstaben wie Kafka und der Vokal e wiederholt sich an den gleichen Stellen wie der Vokal a in Kafka".

8. Kate Flores: "The Judgement", in "Franz Kafka Today", p. 12.

9. Kafka, as Brod suggests, probably modelled the friend in Russia on the Yiddish actor, Isak Löwy.

10. E, p. 57 f.

11. H, p. 175.

11a. E, p. 59.

12. H, pp. 168 and 169.

13. H, p. 202 f.

14. H, p. 203.

14a. T, p. 47.

15. H, p. 209 f.

16. E, p. 64.

17. H, p. 213.

18. MB, p. 31.

19. T, p. 139.

20. H, p. 170.

21. H, p. 182.

22. T, p. 132.

23. E, p. 65.

24. H, p. 183.

25. op. cit., p. 23.

26. T, p. 565.

Chapter III

1. Paul L. Landsberg: "The Metamorphosis", in "The Kafka Problem", p. 126.
2. T, p. 296.
3. T, p. 351.
4. MB, p. 97.
5. T, p. 61.
6. MB, p. 97.
7. MB, p. 98.
8. T, p. 41.
9. MB, p. 113; also B, p. 108.
10. T, p. 57 f.
11. E, p. 71.
12. E, p. 72.
13. E, p. 72.
14. E, p. 73.
15. E, p. 79.
16. E, p. 73.
17. E, p. 71.
18. In subsequent chapters we will attempt to show that although Kafka's works could never be called "Freudian allegories", he did make extensive use of the theory of repression.
19. In "Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido", Leipzig and Vienna, 1912.
20. E, p. 75.
21. op. cit., p. 126.
22. op. cit., p. 222.
23. E, p. 115.

24. E, p. 115 f.
25. E, p. 80.
26. E, p. 118.
27. H, p. 189.
28. E, p. 123.
29. E, p. 134.
30. H, p. 192.
31. H, p. 192.
32. E, p. 130.
33. E, p. 137.

Chapter IV, Part I.

1. There are almost twice as many critical works on "Der Prozeß" or "Das Schloß" as there are on "Amerika".
2. MB, p. 157.
3. B, p. 116.
4. Charles Neider: "Kafka : His Mind and Art", London, 1949, p. 97.
5. op. cit., p. 227 ff.
6. Charles Neider: op. cit.
7. Alfred Borchardt: "Kafkas zweites Gesicht", Nürnberg, 1960.
8. A, p. 44.
9. op. cit., p. 97.
10. A, p. 11.
11. A, p. 13.
12. A, p. 21.

13. In essence, it is the word "crush" to which we object. Clearly, a homosexual relationship can be of an extremely intense nature. One thinks in this connection of Mann's "Tod in Venedig".

14. Mark Spilka: "Amerika : Its Genesis", in "Franz Kafka Today", p. 103.

15. Charles Dickens: Preface to "David Copperfield".

16. A, p. 24.

17. A, p. 26 f.

18. A, p. 27.

19. A, p. 25.

20. H, p. 175.

21. A, p. 29.

22. E, p. 116.

23. A, p. 25.

24. A, p. 31.

25. A, p. 42.

26. A, p. 43.

27. MB, p. 97.

28. A, p. 47.

29. Charles Neider: op. cit., p. 97.

30. A, p. 71.

31. The two insurance firms in which Kafka was employed.

32. A, p. 48.

33. W, p. 246.

34. B, p. 505, n. 8.

35. W, p. 21 f.; T, p. 558.

36. A, p. 35.

37. Herbert Tauber: "Franz Kafka: eine Deutung seiner Werke", Zürich and New York, 1941, p. 39.

38. B, p. 49.

39. A, p. 48.

40. A, p. 54 f.

41. MB, p. 99.

42. T, p. 535 f.

43. H, p. 348.

44. op. cit., p. 105.

45. T, p. 536.

46. A, p. 27.

47. op. cit., p. 89.

Chapter IV, Part II.

1. op. cit., p. 59.

2. Thomas Mann: "Tonio Kröger", "Gesammelte Werke", S. Fischer Verlag, 1960, Vol. VIII, p. 295.

3. Thomas Mann: "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen", Berlin, 1919, p. 179.

4. Roy Pascal: "The German Novel", Manchester, 1957, p. 292.

5. Alfred Borchardt: op. cit.

6. Günther Anders: "Kafka : Pro und Contra", München, 1951, p. 10.

7. Thomas Mann: "Dem Dichter zu Ehren", "Gesammelte Werke", ed. cit., Vol. X, p. 773.

8. Thomas Mann: "Tonio Kröger", "Gesammelte Werke", ed. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 300 f.

9. ibid., p. 297.

10. J, p. 38.
11. H, p. 202 f.
12. op. cit., p. 87.
13. T, p. 481.
14. op. cit., p. 221.
15. op. cit., p. 233.
16. J, p. 56.
17. Mark Spilka: "Dickens and Kafka : A Mutual Interpretation", Thesis, Indiana University, 1956, p. v (Preface).
18. R.M. Rilke: "Briefe und Tagebücher", Leipzig, 1931, p. 331.
19. R.M. Rilke: "Erzählungen und Skizzen aus der Frühzeit", ("Die Letzten"), Leipzig, 1928, p. 280.
20. A, p. 38.
21. A, p. 62.
22. A, p. 64.
23. H, p. 172.
24. A, p. 110.
25. A, p. 195.
26. A, p. 196.
27. A, p. 213.
28. J, p. 72.

Chapter V.

1. "Legende" is Kafka's own word. "Parable" might be more appropriate.
2. P, p. 257.

3. P, p. 245.

4. op. cit., p. 116.

5. Thomas Mann: "Tonio Kröger", ed. cit., p. 295.

6. Josef K. is the more ambitious of the two.

7. E, p. 71.

8. P, p. 9.

9. op. cit., p. 269 f.

10. Friedrich Middelhauve: "Ich und Welt im Frühwerk Franz Kafkas", Thesis, Freiburg i. Br., 1957, p. 236.

11. E, p. 71.

12. P, p. 12 f.

13. E, p. 75.

14. P, p. 30 f.

15. We do not intend to suggest, however, as Neider does, that Kafka's works are "Freudian allegories". It would, perhaps, be more accurate to state that Kafka was <u>aware</u> that the Freudian theory of repression could be applied to his own situation and that it is this very "awareness" that appears in the works.

16. Most notably, Paul Goodman.

17. E, p. 77.

18. P, p. 55.

19. E, p. 108.

20. P, p. 137.

21. E, p. 136.

22. P, p. 268.

23. i.e. of his conscience.

24. An interpretation prevalent in theological circles.

25. Norbert Fürst: "Die offenen Geheimtüren Franz Kafkas", Heidelberg, 1956.
26. Charles Neider: op. cit.
27. H, p. 209 f.
28. MB, p. 170.
29. T, p. 160.
30. T, p. 555.
31. T, p. 308.
32. T, p. 544.
33. T, p. 554.
34. Michel Carrouges: "Franz Kafka", Paris, 1948, p. 91.
35. H, p. 208.
36. H, p. 216.
37. H, p. 216.
38. H, p. 209.
39. "The Babylonian Talmud", Soncino Press, London, 1936, "Nashim" I, p. 426.
40. ibid., p. 418.
41. ibid., p. 423.
42. ed. cit., "Nashim" VIII, p. 142.
43. T, p. 508.
44. T, p. 553.
45. T, p. 558.
46. BK, p. 23.
47. P, p. 9.
48. P, p. 21.
49. P, p. 114.

50. P, p. 14.

51. P, p. 270.

52. MB, p. 102.

53. P, p. 10.

54. P, p. 54.

55. André Németh: "Kafka ou le Mystère Juif", Paris, 1947, p. 91.

56. e.g. Charles Neider, Heinz Politzer.

57. op. cit., p. 38.

58. MB, p. 214.

59. H.S. Reiss: "Franz Kafka: Eine Betrachtung seines Werkes", Heidelberg, 1952, p. 67.

60. Erich Heller, in his book "The Disinherited Mind". Not every critic would find his interpretation of "Das Schloß" "convincing".

61. op. cit., p. 231.

62. Gerhard Kaiser: "Franz Kafkas 'Prozeß'. Versuch einer Interpretation", in Euphorion, 1958 : 1, p. 25.

63. P, p. 152.

64. P, p. 31.

65. P, p. 27 f.

66. P, p. 72.

67. T, p. 515.

68. P, p. 35.

69. P, p. 42.

70. P, p. 42 f.

71. P, p. 99 f.

72. Max Brod: "Franz Kafkas Glauben und Lehre", Winterthur and München, 1948, p. 49.

73. P, p. 152.

74. P, p. 24 f.

75. P, p. 25.

76. P, p. 253.

77. Paul Goodman: "Kafka's Prayer", New York, 1947, p. 154.

78. René Dauvin: "The Trial : Its Meaning", in "Franz Kafka Today", p. 145 f.

79. P, p. 107.

80. P, p. 110.

81. P, p. 55.

82. P, p. 265.

83. P, p. 267 f.

84. P, p. 36.

85. Sigmund Freud: "Gesammelte Werke", London, 1948, Vol. XIV, p. 146 f.

86. ibid.

87. ed. cit., Vol. X, p. 260.

88. P, p. 15.

89. P, p. 105.

90. The stoker's cabin had a similar function in "Der Heizer".

91. P, p. 104. cp. T, p. 534: "Die Peitschen, mit denen wir einander hauen, haben gut Knoten angesetzt in den fünf Jahren." (Reference to his engagement to F.B.)

92. P, p. 107.

93. P, p. 109.

94. P, p. 110 f.

95. H, p. 335.

96. P, p. 139 ff.

97. P, p. 141.

98. P, p. 146.

99. Block's trial began immediately after the death of his wife.

100. P, p. 159 f.

101. P, p. 253.

102. P, p. 254.

103. P, p. 268.

104. MB, p. 203 f.

105. Goethe: "Werke", Meyers Klassiker=Ausgaben, Leipzig und Wien, edited by Karl Heinemann, Vol. 6, p. 171.

106. T, p. 316.

107. H, p. 189 f.

108. P, p. 30.

109. P, p. 95.

110. T, p. 198 f.

111. The following ingenious interpretation of her rôle in the novel is given by Charles Neider: "Montag means Monday, the day of the moon, and moon alludes to chastity, virginity, menses and madness. Thus Bürstner protects herself by means of her monthly affliction." (op. cit., p. 157).

112. T, p. 439.

113. P, p. 97 f.

114. P, p. 33.

115. H, p. 213 f.

116. H, p. 213 f.

117. P, p. 67.

118. Harry Slochower: "Franz Kafka, Pre-Fascist Exile", in "A Franz Kafka Miscellany", New York, 1946, pp. 7-30.

119. ed. cit., "Nashim" I, p. XXX f.

120. H, p. 212.

121. P, p. 67.

122. op. cit., p. 112.

123. P, p. 72 f.

124. P, p. 89.

125. H, p. 217 f.

126. P, p. 197.

Chapter VI.

1. "Der Prozeß".

2. Alfred Borchardt: op. cit.

3. Walter J. Ong: "Kafka's Castle in the West", in "Thought", Sept. 1947.

4. op. cit., p. 228.

5. Nathan A. Scott Jr.: "Rehearsals of Discomposure", London, 1953, p. 34 f.

6. Charles Neider: op. cit.

7. H, p. 173.

8. B, p. 164.

9. H, p. 167.

10. H, p. 131 f.

11. T, p. 544.

12. MB, p. 178.

13. T, p. 310.

14. T, p. 137.

15. T, p. 479.

16. H, p. 283.

17. Max Brod: "Verzweiflung und Erlösung im Werk Franz Kafkas", Frankfurt/M., 1959, p. 5.

18. MB, p. 208.

19. The three quotations are:

> "Nicht verzweifeln, auch darüber nicht, daß du nicht verzweifelst. Wenn schon alles zu Ende scheint, kommen doch noch neue Kräfte angerückt, das bedeutet eben, daß du lebst."
>
> "Zeitweilige Befriedigung kann ich von Arbeiten wie 'Landarzt' noch haben ..., Glück aber nur, falls ich die Welt ins Reine, Wahre, Unveränderliche heben kann."
>
> "Starker Regenguß. Stelle dich dem Regen entgegen, daß die eisernen Strahlen dich durchdringen, gleite in dem Wasser, das dich fortschwemmen will, aber bleibe doch, erwarte so, aufrecht, die plötzlich und endlos einströmende Sonne."

20. W, p. 76.

21. Felix Weltsch: "Religion und Humor im Leben und Werk Franz Kafkas", Berlin, 1957, p. 35.

22. H, p. 199.

23. W, p. 41; unpublished letter to Klaus Wagenbach.

24. W, p. 60.

25. W, p. 60.

26. W, p. 102.

27. B, p. 495.

28. T, p. 233 f.

29. T, p. 350.

30. T, p. 479.

31. T, p. 346.

32. B, p. 161.

33. T, p. 529.

34. MB, p. 199.

35. Quoted from: W. Lowrie: "Kierkegaard", O.U.P., 1938, p. 195.

36. T, p. 311.

37. E.L. Allen: "Kierkegaard: His Life and Thought", London, 1935, p. 30.

38. T, p. 318.

39. T, p. 318 ff.

40. B, p. 190.

41. Søren Kierkegaard: "Fear and Trembling", (translated by Robert Payne), O.U.P., 1939, p. 34.

42. Max Brod's title.

43. Felix Weltsch: "Kafkas Aphorismen", in Neue Deutsche Hefte, 1954 : 4.

44. H, p. 50.

45. H, p. 48.

46. H, p. 199.

47. T, p. 561 f.

48. B, p. 401.

49. J, p. 61.

50. J, p. 16.

51. B, p. 436 f.

52. cf. also Aphorism 32.

53. op. cit., p. 74.

Chapter VII.

1. T, p. 527 f.

2. E, p. 234.

3. op. cit., p. 84.

4. B, p. 150.

5. E, p. 205.

6. E, p. 228.

7. E, p. 236.

8. Friedrich Nietzsche: "Werke", Leipzig, 1900, Vol. 5, p. 163 f.

9. op. cit., p. 222.

10. P, p. 139 f. and P, p. 180.

11. E, p. 205 f.

12. P, p. 146.

13. E, p. 199 ff.

14. E, p. 211.

15. P, p. 234.

16. E, p. 218.

17. Austen Warren: "Kosmos Kafka", in "The Kafka Problem", p. 71.

18. Kafka probably made sketches of the machine, though none are preserved. In the "Briefe an Milena" there is a drawing by Kafka of a machine which has been invented with the purpose of tearing the victim's body in half. Kafka adds a short commentary on the pros and cons of the machine - his own invention.

19. E, p. 209.
20. MB, p. 103 f.
21. op. cit., p. 318 f.
22. op. cit., Vol. 7, pp. 390 and 392.
23. op. cit., p. 226.
24. E, p. 220 f.
25. E, p. 221.
26. Charles Darwin: "The Origin of Species", sixth ed., London, 1882, pp. 421 and 429.
27. E, pp. 215 and 226.

Chapter VIII.

1. B, p. 216.
2. T, p. 28.
3. op. cit., p. 71.
4. Max Brod: Postscript to "Description of a Struggle and The Great Wall of China", (translated by Willa and Edwin Muir and Tania and James Stern) London, 1960, p. 342.
5. Günther Anders: op. cit.
6. B, p. 17 f.
7. BK, p. 222.
8. T, p. 171 f.
9. BK, p. 220.
10. MB, p. 78 f.
11. BK, p. 234.
12. P, p. 317.

13. J, p. 23.

14. BK, p. 224.

15. H, p. 179.

16. H, p. 162.

17. T, p. 296.

18. BK, p. 231.

19. In his book: "Franz Kafka : Parable and Paradox", Cornell Univ. Press, 1963.

20. BK, p. 141.

21. BK, p. 143.

22. op. cit., p. 119.

23. BK, p. 144.

24. BK, p. 170.

25. H, p. 328.

26. BK, p. 78.

27. BK, p. 79.

28. BK, p. 81 f.

29. BK, p. 75.

30. Nahum N. Glatzer: "Franz Kafka and the Tree of Knowledge" in "Between East and West", edited by A. Altmann, p. 49.

31. Goethe: "Werke", ed. cit., Vol. 5, p. 33.

32. BK, p. 73.

32a. H, p. 39.

33. Goethe: "Werke", ed. cit., Vol. 5, p. 467.

34. BK, p. 79.

35. BK, p. 90.

36. B, p. 236.

37. BK, p. 73.

38. op. cit., p. 95.

39. op. cit., p. 80 f.

40. op. cit., p. 74.

41. E, p. 170.

42. E, p. 170 f.

43. T, p. 223 f.

44. William C. Rubenstein: "A Report to an Academy", in "Franz Kafka Today", p. 57 f.

45. E, p. 184.

46. T, p. 311 f.

47. T, p. 384.

48. H, p. 167 f.

49. T, p. 229.

50. E, p. 196.

51. op. cit., p. 246.

52. op. cit., p. 85.

Chapter IX.

1. op. cit., p. 117 f.

2. Exodus 2 : 22.

3. Pavel Eisner: "Franz Kafka and Prague", New York, 1950.

4. ibid.

5. MB, p. 119.

6. M, p. 247.

7. S, p. 81.
8. S, p. 20.
9. J, p. 64.
10. H, p. 120 f.
11. MB, p. 228 f.
12. S, p. 73.
13. S, p. 19 f.
14. J, p. 36.
15. M, p. 220.
16. T, p. 465.
17. S, p. 23 f.
18. "The Babylonian Talmud", ed. cit., "Nashim" I, p. 312.
19. S, p. 69 f.
20. B, p. 403 f.
21. "The Babylonian Talmud", ed. cit., "'Erubin", p. 11.
22. ibid., p. 405 f.
23. S, p. 82.
24. S, p. 429.
25. H, p. 122.
26. MB, p. 121 f.
27. H, p. 281.
28. T, p. 534 f.
29. J, p. 105.
30. M, p. 115.
31. S, p. 13.

32. S, p. 164.

33. S, p. 102.

33a. S, p. 161.

34. B, p. 21.

35. T, p. 303.

36. S, pp. 130 and 102.

37. S, p. 342.

38. B, p. 384.

39. S, p. 92.

40. B, p. 386.

41. T, p. 174. Kafka is quoting from the Talmud.

42. Charles Neider: op. cit., p. 91.

43. H, p. 208.

44. J, p. 64.

45. T, p. 475.

46. William Wasserstrom: "In Gertrude's Closet", in Yale Review, 1958, p. 258.

47. H, p. 118.

48. M, p. 266.

49. MB, p. 269.

50. B, p. 140.

51. M, p. 180.

52. T, p. 285.

53. S, p. 52 ff.

54. B, p. 285.

55. S, p. 311.

56. "The Babylonian Talmud", ed. cit., "Nashim" I, p. 14.

57. S, p. 444.

58. S, p. 487.

59. S, p. 445.

60. M, p. 50 f.

61. H, p. 91.

62. J, p. 85.

63. B, p. 439.

64. Frederick A. Olafson: "Kafka and the Primacy of the Ethical", in The Hudson Review, Spring 1960, p. 65 f.

65. S, p. 437.

66. S, p. 110.

67. S, p. 72.

68. S, p. 157.

69. H, p. 84.

70. H, p. 84.

71. H, p. 101.

72. S, p. 14.

73. S, p. 18.

74. S, p. 88.

75. S, pp. 117 and 435.

76. S, p. 117.

77. T, p. 464.

78. S, p. 234 f.

79. op. cit., p. 239.

79a. S, p. 9.

80. op. cit., p. 240.

81. S, p. 17 f.

82. S, p. 143.

83. Erich Heller: "The World of Franz Kafka", in "The Disinherited Mind", Penguin Books, 1961, p. 197.

84. Ronald Gray: "Kafka's Castle", Cambridge, 1956, p. 111.

85. ibid., p. 120, n.1.

86. S, p. 46 f.

87. T, p. 306.

88. S, p. 279.

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90. S, p. 255 f.

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In addition to the above, some 200 articles on Kafka were consulted. Since, however, few of these are mentioned in the text and the majority proved of little value, it was not thought necessary to include them in the Bibliography. Reference is made in the Notes to each work mentioned in the text.

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